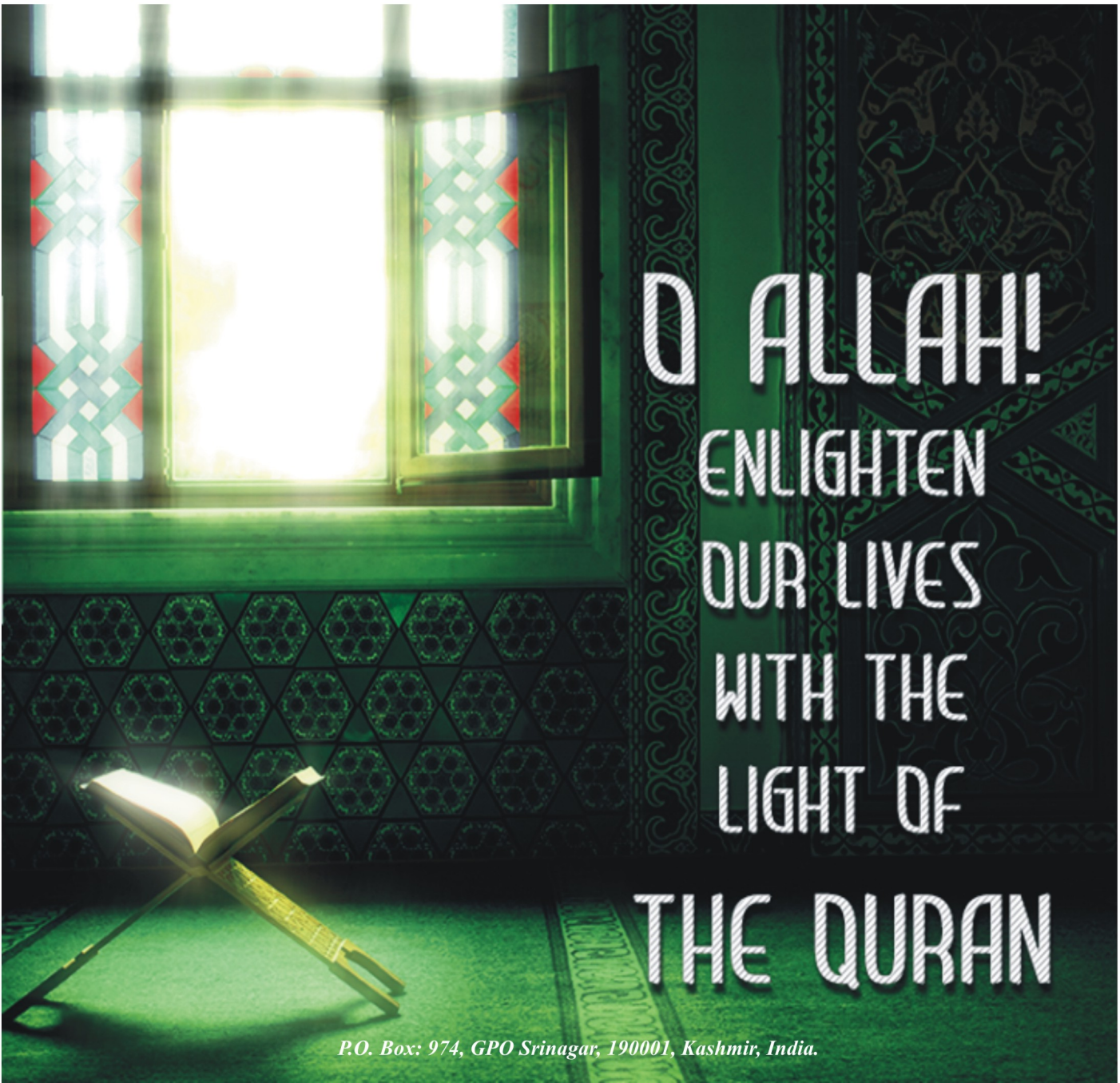


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RADIANT REALITY

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O ALLAH!
ENLIGHTEN
OUR LIVES
WITH THE
LIGHT OF
THE QURAN

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RADIANT REALITY

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This magazine is dedicated to the greatest and the last Prophet Sayyidna Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) on whom the succession of Prophethood ended and got sealed forever.

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EDITORIAL

All thanks for Almighty, the most Merciful and Exalted

The Natural Good

Good and evil are not alien to humankind. Humans are equipped with a sharp vision to separate the former from the latter. More often than not, he strikes the right choice between right and wrong. Even where he fails, he is found to have another good sense. This sense helps him appreciate the correct choice when someone else distinguishes between good and evil. While he appears to be instinctively inclined to good in order to personify it, he seems to experience strong repulsion to evil – so much so that he wants to eliminate it altogether. His adherence to good makes him feel relieved, contented, and humble. And his submission to evil causes him to feel low, embarrassed and arrogant. However, perpetual adherence to either virtue or vice determines the course of his life before too long. Little does he deviate from this course once it is set by his conscious compliance with either of them – he is then destined to reach the destination defined by his own actions.

The Holy Quran says that the Lord has shown him both these ways. In addition to blessing him with eyes, tongue and lips, he also blessed him with the knowledge of right and wrong (Quran 90:9-10). At more than one place, the Quran reinforces that man knows both ways and it is up to him to choose whatever he may wish; he can either become thankful by taking the correct course of life or be unthankful by treading the path of evil (Quran 76:3). The Lord indeed has inspired to him the boundaries to respect and the vices to avoid that lie beyond them (Quran 91:7-8). The assertions of the Quran can hardly be dis-

puted since they depict a phenomenon commonly observed. The tradition of the majority of humankind seems to be pregnant with narratives of how they have cherished the good virtues and loathed the despicable ways of evil. The annals of history record the awe inspiring anecdotes of the sacrifices made for upholding the virtue of justice, and eradicating the evil of oppression. From a simple shoemaker to a grand emperor each has made unforgettable contributions to the preservation of virtues and elimination of evil. It is therefore highly improbable that we can put down the assertions of the Holy Book regarding the human knowledge of right and wrong.

Despite our instinctive impulses to comply with our knowledge of good and bad, the Holy Quran enjoins upon us to remind each other of the mutual teaching of Truth. It is true that we have the knowledge; we nonetheless have other frailties that obstruct perpetual adherence to good. The Holy Book recognizes that to have this knowledge does not mean that we have acquired a knack and that we are now preconditioned to do good (Quran 103:3). For if we were conditioned, there would have been no reward for us in the Hereafter. To confuse knowledge with conditioning is to overlook the central problem in most issues facing humankind on the face of this earth. Unless hypnotized by falsehood, man will carry out good works by his own free desire. To galvanize human desire into the favor of good, one needs to be reminded constantly. It is a duty prescribed for us – to help others and be helped in order to lead a life that is virtuous.

Question Answer

Question

Some people offer two rakats salat after witr salat. What is the origin and ruling of this salat?

Answer

It is mentioned in some hadiths that the Holy Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) said "Make witr your last salat for the night". In other hadiths, it is mentioned that the Holy Messenger (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) offered two rakats of nafl salat after witr. Based on the first hadith, the ulama say that not offering any nafl salat after witr is mustahab (ie. better and commendable); and based on the second hadith, the ulama say that offering nafl after witr is permissible and not sinful. (Fat-hul Qadeer: 1/454; Ahsanul Fatawa 3/500).

In short, it is permissible and not sinful to offer two or more rakats of nafl after witr. However it is better and mustahab to make witr the last prayer of the night. The reason why Rasulullah (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) sometimes offered two rakats nafl after witr was to teach the ummah that it is permissible and not sinful to offer nafl after witr. Had the Prophet (sallallaahu alaihi wa sallam) not done this, people would have thought (due to the first hadith mentioned above) that it is compulsory to make witr the last salat of the night

Hence if someone offers nafl salat after witr or he does not do so, in both cases he should not be rebuked or criticised.

M. Faizal Riza

Question

A non muslim friend asked why Muslims are not allowed to eat shark flesh. I know that sharks are predators but so is tuna. Please give me the correct explanation so I can pass on the correct information.

Answer

Those creatures of the sea that are classified as fish are permitted to eat regardless of them being predators or not. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said with regards to seafood:

"Two types of carrion (non-slaughtered creatures) have been made Halaal (lawful) for us, fish and locust." (Musnad Ahmed, Hadith #: 3218, Narrated by Ibn Umar)

The notion that Muslims are not allowed to consume shark is incorrect. Shark is classified as a fish and is permissible to eat.

Mufti Suhail Tarmahomed

Question

Can 01 sheep or goat be sacrificed for all marhooms in the family.

Answer

If the Qurbani is an optional one, then the intention for more than one Marhoom (deceased) can be made. Hence, one Qurbani can be made for all the Marhooms in one's family. (Fataawa Rahimiyah vol.8)

Mufti Moosa

Question

I have qadaah fasts am I allowed to

(Vol.16, Issue: 12) 3.

keep the Muharram fast or do I need to complete my outstanding fasts first

Answer

It is better for you to do the qadha fasts. You may do the qadha fast with the Muharram Aashura fasts. According to some Ulama you will receive the thawaab for both.

Mufti Ebrahim

Question

Please let me know if it's sunnah to give athaan and ikamaah if one is reading salaah alone .

Answer

It is an emphasized Sunnah for men to give both the Azaan and Iqaamah for obligatory prayers, even when praying alone. (Maraqi al-Falah Pg. 194-195)

Sayyiduna Uqba ibn Amir (RA) relates that I heard Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) say: "Your Rabb, the Exalted, is pleased with a shepherd of goats at the peak of a mountain, who makes the call to prayer (gives the Azaan) and offers prayer. Allah, the Exalted, says, "Look at this servant of mine; he gives the Azaan and Iqama for prayer out of fear for me. I have forgiven my slave and entered him into Paradise." (Sunan Abi Dawud 1196)

Mufti Moosa

Question

Is it wrong to fast only on the day of Ashura?

Answer

When fasting on the day of Aashura, it is advisable to fast one day before or one day after the day of Aashura to avoid imitating the Jews. Fasting only on the day of Aashura is disliked (Makrooh Tanzih). (Nurul Idhaa pgs. 135-136)

Sayyiduna Abdullah bin 'Abbas (RA) reported that when the Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) fasted on the day of Aashura and commanded that it should be observed as a fast, the Sahaabah (RA) said to him: O Messenger of Allah, this is a day which the Jews and Christians hold in high esteem. Thereupon, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) said: "When the next year comes, we will fast on the 9th insha-Allah." However, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) passed away before the advent of the next year. (Muslim)

Mufti Moosa

Question

With regards to the subject (of giving Azaan), the hadth mentions speaks only about men.... What about woman, is it a sin if we were to call the adhaan and iqamaah in a low voice in the presence of only woman, or people of our household e.g my younger brother etc....?

Answer

Islam has not stipulated Azaan or Iqaamah for females. Sayyiduna Abdullah bin Umar RA as well Sayyiduna Abdullah bin Abbas RA have stated, "There is no Azaan or Iqaamah for females." (Sunanul Kubra, Musannaf Abdur Razzaaq)

Hence, females should simply perform their Salaah without Azaan or Iqaamah.

Mufti Moosa

Question

I have met a few people that have said they vegetable fast during the first 10 days of Muharram, as in they do not eat meat for the first 10 days of Muharram. Please can you advise if this is necessary, the benefits and why it is done?

Answer

A vegetable fast during Muharram or

during any time of the year has no basis in Islam. Considering such a fast to be a part of Deen will be a Bid'ah (an innovation alien to Islamic teachings). Vegetable fasts are practiced by Hindus and Christians as they refrain from meat during their fasts.

Mufti Moosa

Question

I just need some clarification on the method of performing sunate muakadah and sunate ghair muakadah.

Will I be correct in saying that in sunate ghair muakadah, which is at asr and Esha times. One would recite surah fatiha and a surah in each of the 4 rakahs, whereas in sunate muakadah, one would recite surah fatiha and a surah in the first two rakahs and only surah fatiha in the last two rakahs.

Answer

The method of performing the Sunnah Mu'akkadah and Ghair Mu'akkadah is the same. Surah Faatihah and a Surah should be recited in all four Rak'ahs. This ruling applies to Nafl Salaah as well.

Only in Fardh Salaah is the additional Surah omitted in the 3rd and 4th Rak'ahs and only Surah Fatihah should be recited.

Mufti Suhail

Question

Please tell me what's the best way for a child to call his father and mother?

Answer

The manner of respectfully addressing one's parents will depend on the general environment and norm of the place and time. If it is a norm to call one's father as Abi, Dad, Daddy, or in the case of one's mother as Um-mi, Mum, Mummy, etc. then this is will be appropriate.

Furthermore, it is not only the word

used to address one's parents that should be respectful, but also the tone and manner in which we address them should reflect love and respect.

Mufti Moosa

Question

Is it permissible to commit suicide?

Answer

Allah is our Creator. He has granted us life and sent us to this world to test our submission to Him. During this test various good and bad conditions come upon a person. Allah says:

Do people think We will leave them saying we believe and they will not be tested. Verily we have tested the people in the past so that the truthful are known and the liars are known. (29:2-3)

In another verse Allah says,

Verily we will test you with fear hunger and by decrease in wealth, lives and fruit crops. Glad tidings for the patient ones who at the time of adversities say, verily we belong to Allah and to Him we return. (2:155-156)

It is narrated on the authority of Jabir ibn Samurah (RA): A man who had killed himself with a broad arrow-head was brought to Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam and He did not pray the funeral prayer for him.

The solution to the different aggravations in life is not to take one's life, rather, to be patient and seek assistance from Allah directly. Taking one's life (suicide) is strictly prohibited. Such a person will continuously be punished after death in the same manner he had taken his life. Thus, anyone who is in the right state of mind will not run away from the heat of the desert and throw himself into the burning fire. How can one flee from temporary hardship and difficulty which inevitably will come to an end to an eternal

punishment which has no end?

Life is a trust from Allah and one cannot do as he wishes with someone else's property. A person who breaches the trust of Allah will be held in contempt for his action.

A person involved in such conditions should ponder and realize that he/she is not the only one who is affected by calamity and hardship. Calamities befell the greatest of mankind, i.e., the Prophets, Messengers and the righteous. They also befell the worst of mankind, i.e., the disbelievers.

Calamity is part of the natural order of things and everyone is faced by it.

Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam said: "No pain, hardship, sickness or grief befalls a Muslim, not even worry that befalls him, but some of his bad deeds will be expiated."

As Muslims, we believe in predestine (Taqdeer) and that all good and bad is from Allah. Many a times a person is afflicted with certain problems and calamities, this is only to test and see how a Muslim reacts to these adverse conditions. Whether we are patient and put our reliance on Allah, or do we turn our backs and complain and have evil perception. Accordingly, he will be rewarded, whether it is apparent in this world or the hereafter.

Mufti Ismail

Question

what is the best istighfaar to read every night?

Answer

The best form of Istighfaar is Sayyid-ul Istighfaar which is as follows:

Transliteration: Allahumma Anta Rabbee La Ilaha Illa Ant. Khalaqtanee wa Ana Abduka wa Ana Ala Ahdika wa Wa'dika Masta Ta'tu. Aboo'u Laka Bi Ni'matika Alayya Wa'Aboo'u Laka Bi Zambee Faghfirlee Fa'innahu La

Yaghfiruz Zunooba Illa Anta.

Translation: O Allah! You are my Cherisher. There is no deity except You. You have created me and I am Your servant. As far as possible, I abide by my solemn promise and covenant to You. I seek Your protection against the consequences of my wrongdoings. I fully acknowledge the grace You have bestowed upon me and I confess my faults. So pardon me my sins as none but You can pardon sins.

Mufti Suhail

Question

Is it possible to eat in a place that does serve alcohol and pork even if u do not drink the alcohol or eat the pork. Is it possible to eat the vegetarian food of such an establishment?

Answer

It is not permissible for Muslims to eat at such places regardless of selecting the vegetarian menu. The fact that alcohol and pork are being served at the same venue demands that a Muslim stay far from such a place. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam) has prohibited partaking of meals from the table where alcohol is being served. Sayyiduna Jabir bin Abdillah (RA) reports that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alayhi Wa Sallam) said:

"Whoever truly believes in Allah and the day of Judgment, will not sit at a table where alcohol is served." (Musnad Ahmed)

Mufti Suhail

Question

I hear that nowadays ladies can travel alone provided they have a mobile phone with them. It is assumed that the mobile phone acts as a mahram. Is such a thing valid?

Answer

The idea that a mobile phone replac-

es the requirement of a Mahram is baseless and illogical. It is necessary for a female to be accompanied by her husband or a Mahram male relative when travelling a distance of 78km or more. Rasulullah Sallallahu Alayhi wa Sallam has stated: "No woman should travel except with a mahram." (Bukhari)

Mufti Suhail

Question

Is it allowed to drop your hands to your side when the Imam finishes a surah, before he can read Allahu akbar for the rukuh?

Answer

It is incorrect to drop the hands to the side before the Takbeer (Allahu Akbar). The hands should remain tied until the Takbeer for Ruku is made. Dropping the hands before the Takbeer of Ruku is considered Makruh (disliked). (Badaai-us-Sanaai' Vol. 1 pg. 201)

Mufti Moosa

Question

I would like to know the concept of dating in Islam and what are the conditions attached to such with regards to permissibility as well as haraam?

Answer

Besides one's spouse and mahrams (those immediate relatives with whom marriage is impermissible), any communication or contact with anyone of the opposite gender is impermissible.

In the case of genuine necessity (which the sharee'ah recognizes as necessity) only the most formal discussion totally confined to the genuine need will be permissible. A simple example of this is a doctor. He will ask the female patient that he is treating the necessary questions to help him to correctly diagnose and treat the illness.

Where there is no such necessity recognized by sharee'ah, the communication and contact is strictly haraam. In such a case, to look at a woman who is not one's wife or mahram is zina of the eyes. To talk to her is zina of the tongue. To hear her talk is zina of the ears. To touch her is zina of the hands, etc. A person involved in zina is engaging in a heinous crime and is greatly distanced from Allah, may Allah protect us.

Dating has all the elements of zina. There is no such concept in Islam. Islam regards dating as a shameless transgression and an act of zina.

Uswatul Muslimah Panel of Ulama SA

Question

Usually I am a person who doesn't really care for worldly things or women. I don't like most women. But then a few years back I remember this one girl. She is Chinese so I don't really know what her beliefs are but she's not a Muslim. She was the only (female) person that would actually converse with me in class and she was really nice and kind. She lives nearby and I've known her for a year. This was the first time I've ever felt the emotion of 'love'. I've fell in love with her ever since and now it's getting to the point I am becoming lovesick. Starting a few days back, I've started crying every night, longing to marry/live with her. I've also said things along the lines of "I refuse to marry unless it's her". So here is my question, If I (inshallah) go to Jannah and she does not, and I desire for her to live with me in Jannah, will Allah forgive her and grant my wish? What if she was married to someone else in the world? Will she still be able to live with me? I even refuse to look at other girls because of my love for her.

Answer

The pain, anguish and anxiety you

are experiencing is something Shariah tried to save you by prohibiting the intermingling with the opposite gender.

You have transgressed the limits of Shariah and got caught up with this girl. Your pain and anxiety is the consequences of the Haraam your nafs has committed. If you would have remained with the limits of Shariah, you would not have been experiencing all such feelings.

Nevertheless, if you intend marrying the girl in reference, first consult your parents and confide in them. Marriage is a major step in life. You have to choose the right partner. Your parents have the insight in life to guide you. It appears your infatuation of the girl and emotions are riding on you. You are not even considering the issue of Imaan and kufr. If you want to be with her in any way, would you consider being thrown in hell if she is there? Surely not. That should make you come to your senses and realise that priority be given to Imaan over the love and infatuation you have for her.

Follow principle. Consult with your parents. Present Imaan to her and let her know your intentions to marry her. If she accepts, you will be a means of her embracing Islam. If she refuses, there is no point in choosing someone who doesn't want you.

Love is mutual and parallel to travel on the highway of life. It is not a single road to consider only traffic from the opposite direction!

M. Safwaan

Question

I find myself trapped in the destructive illness of backbiting. I make du'aa to Allah every morning saying: "O Allah! I must not commit any sin today, I must not backbite." Yet I commit this sin by that same

evening. I am very troubled. I read many ahaadeeth and many of your books on the topic of backbiting. Especially your book, "The illnesses of the soul and their treatment". However this has had no effect on me. I manage to fear this sin for 2-3 days but then start committing it again. I am now backbiting more than ever since my sister-in-law has come into the house. I am very troubled and do not know how to save myself from this sin.

Answer

Think of the punishment for backbiting: Your good deeds will be given to the person about whom you engaged in backbiting. If your good deeds are insufficient, the person's evil deeds will be recorded in your book of deeds. Think before you speak. If anyone starts backbiting, either stop them immediately or leave that assembly. Abstain from such company where there is the danger of backbiting taking place. In other words, do not unnecessarily meet people who engage in backbiting. If you meet them, agree beforehand that you are not going to engage in any backbiting. Sins are given up through courage, so take courage.

If you spoke ill of someone and the person came to know of it, it is necessary to obtain the person's pardon. If the person did not come to know of it, you must acknowledge your mistake to those in whose presence you engaged in backbiting. Speak good of the person by saying: "The person about whom we spoke ill has many good qualities." Send rewards for this person (eesaal-e-sawaab) and also seek forgiveness from Allah.

By doing all this, insha-Allah the habit of backbiting will go away.

Lesson From The Qur'an

“God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens through which rivers flow, therein to abide, and blessed dwellings in Gardens of perpetual bliss; and greater (than those) is God’s being pleased with them. That indeed is the supreme triumph.” (At-Tawbah 9:72)

“Gardens of perpetual bliss” (Jannātu ‘Adn), according to the above verse and several hadīths, are the place where mostly material and partially spiritual pleasures will be tasted. Indeed, there are people whose physical desires outweigh their spiritual desires and whose carnal desires are dominant. “Gardens of perpetual bliss,” which include every kind of physical pleasure in it, mean a lot to such kind of people as a reward. While there are others whose spiritual faculties are developed to such degree that pleasures of eating, drinking, and maidens of Paradise mean little to them. They always pursue spiritual pleasures to satisfy their souls. Therefore, the Highest Abode or Floor of Paradise (Jannātu’l-Firdaws) is for them. The part of the verse, “and greater (than those) is God’s being pleased with them,” must be indicative of this.

It is because of the superiority of Firdaws over other abodes or floors of Paradise that God’s Messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said in one of his hadīths: “When you pray for Paradise, ask for Firdaws, for it is the highest of the abodes of Paradise.” First of all, as we understand from the relevant hadīths, Paradise has a conical shape and the Firdaws is such a superior place in this Para-

dise that those who dwell there will be able to observe all the layers of Paradise. Second, since belief in the Unseen did not develop much among ancient communities, they were not able to deepen their knowledge in matters concerning the Unseen and of metaphysical import. As for the ummah, or community, of Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), as its members have deepened in belief in the Unseen and the related issues much more than the previous communities and can therefore be satisfied with spiritual pleasures rather than physical ones, the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) advised his ummah to ask for Firdaws, which is full of spiritual pleasures. It can be said that while the “Gardens of perpetual bliss” (Jannātu ‘Adn) mark the horizon of the bliss of the other communities or the followers of the previous Prophets to certain extents, Firdaws is the Garden of Prophet Muhammad’s (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) ummah.

Actually, God will be pleased with all the people of Paradise, but “God’s greater or particular good pleasure” is the greatest of the bounties of Paradise, one so profound and exceptional that one favored with it no longer needs another bounty and pleasure. There-

fore, the Community of God's Messenger (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), who is the owner of the Maqām al-Mahmūd, or the Station of Being Praised, which symbolizes the reward of being the most grateful to God, will be rewarded with it. In fact, the name Muhammad itself (meaning the One Who is Praised) is exactly consistent with the Station of Being Praised and the Flag of Praising. Since Prophet Muhammad

(Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam), is he who praised and thanked God and called people to thanking and praising Him much more than everybody else, he will be honored with the Station of Being Praised and carrying the Flag of Praise in the other world. Therefore, the abode of his Community will be Firdaws, which signifies God's greater or particular good pleasure, or His being more pleased with some of His servants.

Opening the Floodgates of Allah's Mercy

Shaikh 'Abdul Haq Muhaddith Dehlawi (ra) narrates the following incident:

Delhi was once struck by a very severe drought. Due to the prolonged lack of rain, farms produced no crops and trees bore no fruit. People were suffering to the extent where they longed for even basic bread. Every person made du'aa for rain yet there was not even the slightest sign of a cloud in the sky. The Ulama of the city eventually decided that all the people would gather in an open field on an appointed day. All the people, as well as the children and even the animals, were to come and salaatul istisqaa was to be performed. After the salaah, everybody would repent from their sins and make du'aa for rain.

When the appointed day arrived, all the people gathered outside the city, their faces burning from the intense heat of the blazing sun. After the salaah was performed, all exerted themselves in du'aa, crying and begging for rain. To their dismay, however, not even a wisp of a cloud was visible in the open sky. The children were now restless and the animals thirsty. The condition of the people had deteriorated due to their excessive crying. They continued to exert themselves until the time of 'asr salaah arrived. As they were crying and begging Allah in du'aa, a young traveller happened to pass by the open field. He was holding the bridle of his camel while walking on foot. Seated on the camel was a woman covered in a veil. On seeing the people in distress, he stopped his camel and asked them what was going on. After hearing the details of their plight, he went to his camel and lifted his hands in du'aa. Before he could even lower his hands, the sky filled with clouds and rain began to fall in torrents!

An 'Aalim went up to the youngster and asked him how he had attained the good fortune of being a person whose du'aas were instantly answered. The youngster replied, "Seated on the camel is my mother. She has led a life of such purity and chastity, that neither has she ever set eyes on a strange man nor has a strange man ever set his eyes on her. I clutched the end of her shawl and pleaded to Allah in du'aa, 'O Rabb of the universe! This is my pious and chaste mother. If her piety and chastity is valued in your sight then shower your rain upon your servants.' I had not yet put my hands down when the rain began to fall."

(Khawaateene Islam ke Kaarnaame pg. 212 & Hayaa aur Paakdaamane pg. 36)

Lesson From Sahih al-Bukhari

Dr. Rafiq Ahmad

The Book of Salaah

Cont'd from previous issue

Meeting with Adam (AS)

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) met Sayyiduna Adam (AS), the father of mankind, on the first sky. He saw Adam (AS) smiling on looking to his right and weeping on looking to his left. On his right he looked at the souls of those people destined for Jannat and on his left he looked at those destined for Jahannum. Here the question arises how the souls of those people destined for Jahannum were able to reach the first sky when it is known that the doors of skies are closed down for such souls. It is said that either this scenario was specially arranged for that particular occasion or these were the souls of those people who were yet to come to this world.

Salaah made obligatory—5 equal to 50

After meeting different prophets in different skies (total seven in number), Rasulullah further ascended till he reached a high but plain place where he heard the sounds of the writing pens which were penning down the divine commandments. Here Allah gave His honoured guest a special gift for his Ummah and that gift was that of 50 times

Salaah a day. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was elevated to such a high stature and Allah's nearness which no creation can even dream of. At this highest point he did not forget his Ummah and got from there the gift from Allah which is also called Me'raj. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

"Salaah is the Me'raj of believers"

If a bondsman wants to find nearness of Allah and converse with Him, he should offer Salaah which is Me'raj for him.

Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) accepted this gift gladly and returned. On his way back, he met Musa (AS) who asked him if Allah had given him any gift for his Ummah. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) informed him about the gift of Salaah 50 times a day. On this, Musa (AS) told Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to go back to Allah and request Him for concession as his Ummah would not be able to bear the load of Salaah 50 times a day. Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) returned to Allah and requested Him for the concession which was granted. In this particular Hadith under discussion, the number of Salaah was reduced. In

view of other Ahaadith, the learned scholars of Hadith say that this reduction was made by a fraction of five i.e., on each occasion five Salaahs were lessened. Every time Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) passed by Sayyiduna Musa (AS), he suggested him to go back to Allah for further concession, which was agreed to by Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Finally, when Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) went to Allah for further concession, Allah said that these are five Salaahs equal to fifty and that the affairs remain unchanged before Him. As Allah says:

The Word is not changed with Me.
(50.29)

This time also when Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) passed by Musa (AS) he asked him the same question, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told him that the number of Salaahs remaining obligatory on him and his Ummah were now five. Sayyiduna Musa (AS) again asked Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to return to Allah for further concession. At this juncture, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) refused to return saying that he felt shy to ask further for concession. Finally, five time Salaah remained obligatory on this Ummah and it is the great mercy of Allah to bestow the reward equal to fifty Salaahs for offering only five. The learned scholars say that it is this compounded Thawaab that is referred to by Allah in His statement:

The Word is not changed with Me.
(50.29)

The learned scholars are also of the opinion that probably Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) got the impression that Allah wants to keep 5 time Salaah obligatory by saying the above

quoted statement because of the reason that this statement was not mentioned until the number reached to 5. Since 50 is ten multiple of five, so it means that each Salaah will be rewarded tenfold.

Musa (AS) thought about the concession, why not Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam)?

It is a frequently discussed issue amongst the learned scholars why is it that Sayyiduna Musa (AS) thought about the concession and Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) didn't. Some scholars say that he was so much engrossed in the splendor and nearness of Allah that he could not think of anything else. Secondly he was at the highest point of 'Abdiyah' (bondsmanship) and gladly and quietly accepted the gift which was given to him by the most beloved one. Since Sayyiduna Musa (AS) was not at such a stage, so he could think of these things. Here another question arises and that is why did Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) again and again return to Allah on the suggestion of Sayyiduna Musa (AS). The answer to this question is simple, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was getting further chances to enjoy the conversation and nearness of Allah. Again, why did Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) not go again when Sayyiduna Musa (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) told him that even 5 time Salaah was too much for his Ummah? The answer as already stated is that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) had understood that this is the final number which Allah wants to persist on. Secondly, this Ummah was to surpass earlier Ummats, so less than 5 time Salaah would not have been feasible.

Ibn al-Muneer says that since the concessions were made in the fraction of 5 each time, so when the number of Salaah reached 5, Rasulullah refused Sayyiduna Musa (AS) to go again and ask for further concession apprehending that if these five time Salaah were also waved off then he would be left with nothing. Here, Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said that he felt shy. (Fathul Baari)

Why Sayyiduna Musa (AS) repeatedly suggested to ask for concession?

Ibn Hajr narrates from some learned scholars saying that Musa (AS) asked Allah, "O Lord, show me your essence". Since this request of Musa (AS) was not accepted so he repeatedly wanted to have the glimpse of the personality (i.e., Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) who had seen Allah. That is why Musa (AS) again and again sent back Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) to Allah thus quenching his thirst with the Tajaliyyat Ilaahiyah which used to shower on Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) near Allah.

Numerous scholars believe that Rasulullah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) did not see Allah and that it was only His Nur; and what Musa (AS) did was only out of affection for this Ummah.

Hearts make Homes

All it takes to build a house is a few hands. To build a home, however, hearts are needed. When bricks join and bond, a house is made and when hearts join and bond, a home is made. For married couples to make a home, it is essential that they "have a heart" – be tolerant and overlook each other's faults. If they are not willing to forgive and forget, trivial issues will erupt into big arguments. This will eventually result in the couple becoming the talk of the town with their "dirty laundry" hanging out for all to see.

When cutlery is kept together in the same drawer, the spoons and forks will definitely clash and make noise. Similarly, when the husband and wife are close, some arguments are bound to take place. Despite the bickering and arguing, if one of them has to pass away, all the fights will be forgotten and the surviving partner will cry over the happy memories.

It often happens that a divorce is issued in the midst of a heated argument. Only later on do the couple come to their senses, at which point they start wringing their hands in regret. The depression, at times, even drives them to the point of insanity. Couples thus need to bond their hearts in such a way that they insha-Allah remain united until death does them apart.

Jewish Influence on Islamic Beliefs

Syed Iqbal Zaheer

Shmuley Boteach is a British Rabbi and an erudite author who brings modern learning to Judaic studies. He teaches at the prestigious Oxford University and also lectures extensively spreading the wisdom of Torah, Talmud, Mishna and Kabbalist studies. He first won acclaim when, keeping with the modern, Western, civilizational, (although not civilizing) spirit, he produced a book called "Kosher Sex." It proved to be a best-seller. Although it could be accidental, but the truth is, any talk, show, or writing on sex in our times fetches buyers as no other merchandise does. Look for a common denomination in writings that win Western prizes, whose recipients invoke a six-minute handclapping, and you will discover that it is sex.

Our concern at the moment is Boteach's another book, (a Basic Book publication of year 2002), called "Judaism for Everyone." It is a readable, interestingly written treatise that tells its readers how they can renew their lives through the vibrant lessons of the Jewish faith! The claim on the title page is followed up with bigger claims inside the book. Some are of the kind that freeze any informed person's interests. A few are, in a Muslim's opinion, appalling.

It is these appallingly ideas –

those that pertain to God – that invoke our response, for, in the light of Boteach's another claim, namely, Islam is a byproduct of Judaism, silence would imply, not the acceptance of a historical untruth, but consent to what the Muslims think as preposterous ideas about God.

Writes Boteach about Jewish influence on Islam:

"Directly through the propagation of ethical monotheism, and indirectly through Judaism's daughter religions, Christianity and Islam, the Jews have made God the most potent and important concept in the history of the world. Even in today's world, there is no one word that is as powerful and mysterious as the name of the deity. Nor is any other subject more discussed and debated. The influence of the Jews is astonishing. A nation that began as a small Middle Eastern tribe ended up becoming the most influential and longest-enduring nation in all history."

Although it is true that after the initial decade of military conflict with the Jews, there was never any conflict between Islam and Judaism (until the modern state of Israel was created, through the displacement of the Palestinians), and so, ways were open for Jewish influence on Islam, especially when many of them occupied high positions in Muslim Spain, (culminating in what the Jews remember as their Golden Age), yet

it is a recognized fact that the ideological conflict that started with Judaism – right from the first day of the Prophetic mission – has lasted to this day. This has effectively closed all avenues for Jewish influence on Islamic ideology. Islam gave a concept of Divinity that is uniquely its own, neither found in Jewish literature nor Christian.

The Qur'an did not use allegorical language to describe God, His Attributes, and His ways with humanity. Its narratives about God, are not concealed behind a mass of words dealing with mundane topics, nor in allegories of ambivalent content. God being the main topic of the Qur'an, (the divine Names or Attributes appearing some 3000 times in it), discussions about various aspects of Divinity are embedded in every little passage. The descriptions are strikingly direct, expressed in lucid syllables, and completely devoid of any ambiguity. Any contact with the Qur'an, however brief, leaves the impression on a reader, Muslim or non-Muslim, that the concepts set forth here are totally different from those that Jewish or Christian sources offer. The claim then, that Islam is a daughter religion of Judaism is as fanciful a notion as it is inscrutable.

Below we shall take up a few opinions of the author in refutation of his claim that Islam was born out of Judaism. However, at this instance, we shall deal with only those pertaining to Islamic beliefs about the Deity. And, perhaps to the consternation of some readers who do not like long quotes, we shall quote him in extensively, to avoid any misunderstanding or misrepresentation. Botteach states (unless mentioned, all italics is by us for emphasis):

“Rabbi Harold Kushner’s best-seller, When

Bad Things Happen to Good People, describes God as being subject to the laws of nature. Thus, though He indeed commiserates with our suffering and offers us comfort in moments of woe, there is little He can do to save the righteous man from a hurricane or a volcano. Even God is subject to nature’s laws. This vision seems to have brought comfort to millions of readers.”

But, we must point out that we Muslims do not share this “vision.” To us, God is above all and everything. Nothing is beyond His power. The Qur'an refutes the idea in unequivocal terms. One of its constant refrain is, “*Verily, Allah has power over everything.*”

Nature is no exception. God’s power is overwhelming and irresistible. What is nature after all? It is merely a set of laws that operate the world. God controls this body of laws to such supreme degree that the most minute things do not miss Him. The Qur'an states,

“With Him are the keys to the Unseen. No one knows them except He. He knows what is in the land and in the sea. Not a leaf falls but He knows it, not a grain (is there) in the dark (crevices) of the earth, nor a fresh thing or withered, but it is (recorded) in a Clear Book.” (6:59)

God’s control extends to such a degree that without His leave human would not even be able to hear or see. The Qur'an asks:

“Say, ‘Who provides you out of heaven and earth? Or who owns the hearing and sight? And who brings out the living from the dead, and brings out the dead from the living? And who controls the affair?’ They will surely say, ‘Allah.’ Say then, ‘Will you not fear?’” (10:31)

And,

“Indeed, Allah is the Splitter of the grains and the date-stone; He brings

forth the living from the dead and the dead from the living. That is your God. Where then, are you being driven? The Splitter of the dawn (from the night)..” (6: 95-96)

Indeed, the Qur’an informs us that not only all that exists is subjugated to God, He even makes and breaks the laws. It says,

“Allah erases what He will, or confirms.” (13:39)

It should be obvious that so far as ideas about God are concerned, Jewish thoughts could not have influenced Muslims who firmly believe in the meaning and implication of above Qur’anic descriptions, which are but a few from a vast number in the Qur’an.

While dealing with Divine Attributes, the author expresses the Jewish opinion that there are masculine and feminine aspects to the Qualities of God. He writes,

“The common denominator of all these names and convictions is that they convey either the idea of God’s awesome might (e.g., King of Kings), that which the Kabbalists would describe as the masculine energy of the Godhead, or God’s nurturing or mothering instincts (e.g., The Merciful), conceived by the Kabbalists as the feminine energy within the Godhead. The masculine aspect of God is the immanent God of history, demonstrating peculiarly male-aggressive characteristics. This is the aspect of God that is like a disciplinarian father, rewarding and scolding mankind in accordance with its actions. Represented in the Kabbala by a line because of this divine energy’s tendency to descend from above to below in a direct column (masculine physiology), it is the God who comes down into the earth to interact with human affairs. It is the God who uses the stick to educate man to turn from his foibles and embrace sanctified living. It is the stern God of jus-

tice.

But there is also the feminine God of creation, represented by an all-encompassing circle (feminine physiology), who hovers above creation like a protecting angel, nurturing man through the endless struggle of life, always patient even in the face of human corruption and darkness, awaiting man’s repentance and embracing of the light. Like a mother who loves her children whether they are deserving or not, this God is prepared to forgive man even in his moments of extreme ugliness. This is the infinite side of God, capable of giving birth to universes and endowing all creation equally with life, regardless of merit. The feminine God is the God of compassion. Placed together, the linear and the circular light represent God in all His perfection. A line and a circle together form the number ten (10), representing fullness and completion. Indeed, the Kabbalists maintain that God manifests Himself through ten channels, or sefirot, which represent the full panoply of celestial attributes.” (p. 87-88)

The author also asserts that man carries a sign of God on His reproductive organ when he undergoes circumcision. He writes,

“The sign of circumcision for the Jew is the equivalent of a heavenly ‘Congressional Medal of Honor.’” (p. 387)

And,

“This is why God commanded that on the reproductive organ – man’s greatest symbol of his creative energy and his infinite capacity for Godly emulation – there must be a sign of God to teach man discipline.” (p. 387)

But, apart from the fact that the simile he draws (“feminine physiology,” and, “the sign on the reproductive organ”) are quite revolting to Muslim mind, Islam strictly prohibits any similes drawn for God. This is so well-known among the Muslims, that even the most poorly educated of them will hasten to declare that

Islam does not tolerate any such similitude. The Qur'an has taught its adherents:

“Do not strike similitude for Allah.” (16:74)

According to the Qur'an, Allah is unlike anything that a similitude could be struck for Him. It asserts,

“There is nothing like unto Him.” (42:11)

Accordingly, it has forbidden that any likeness is expressed for Him but for the most profound one. The Qur'an said,

“And for Allah is the Most Profound example.” (16:60)

The Jews have been in a dilemma since two thousand years. On the one hand, they believe they are the chosen people of God. In Boteach's words,

“Biblical references abound of God as the bridegroom of the nation of Israel and the Jews as his chosen bride.” (p. 99)

He quotes Rabbi Moses Ben Nachman, (from Disputation in Barcelona, 1263),

We Jews, you say, are proud and an elite because we reckon ourselves the chosen people of God, but for what were we chosen? To show all nations an example of a people who is not afraid to stand upright on the earth, to regard no man as God, to look even God in the face and not be overwhelmed. This is why we are the chosen people of God, for God does not want us human beings to be wretches and cowards who dare not stand on our own feet.” (p. 261) [Emphasis by author].

Such are the Jewish opinions about themselves. But the Qur'an disagrees with their beliefs and offers them a litmus test to prove their claim by aspiring to meet God. It says,

“O those who have adopted Judaism, if you claim that you are God's beloved ones, apart from other people, then, wish for death if you are truthful.” (Ch. 62, v.6)

The Jews respond by saying that they do not believe in rising up to God. The Torah has scant mention, if any, of the Hereafter. In the words of Boteach himself,

“There are two principal ways for man to bridge the chasm separating him from his Creator. Man can attempt to ascend to the heavens or to bring the Almighty down into this world. And it is precisely this issue that distinguishes Judaism from other world religions. Whereas other religions teach the individual to shed his physicality and ascend to the heavens, Judaism strives to reveal God's glorious presence in the midst of our shared physical world. Whereas other religions beckon man to leave the earth behind and ascend to the heavens, Judaism enjoins man to create heaven on earth.” (p. 43)

And,

“It is in this world that God is to be found, and it is in this world that man must live a Godly life. Holiness must pervade his every action, for no realm of existence is outside God's dominion. Judaism declares that the rejection of the physical world is essentially a rejection of God's omnipresence. The great medieval Jewish philosopher Rabbi Judah Halevi wrote in his magnum opus, the Kuzari: ‘The servant of God does not withdraw himself from secular contact lest he be a burden to the world, and the world to him; he does not hate life, one of God's bounties to him ... On the contrary, he loves this world and wishes for a long life.’”

Thus, there is no need for the Jews to take the litmus test. They love a long life, and do not aspire to the Heaven. How can then anyone imagine that Islam has been influenced by Judaic thought? The Qur'an reminds us in several places,

“Nay, you prefer the life of this world, but the Hereafter is better and longer-lasting.” (87:16-17)

The Humbleness of Heart

Mufti Muhammad Shafi Usmani (ra)

The "humbleness of heart" (Khushu), which the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith speak of, connotes a restfulness of heart and humility arising out of the awareness of Allah's majesty and of one's own insignificance in comparison to it. This quality, once acquired, shows its spiritual fruitfulness in making the obedience to Allah and submission to Him easy and pleasant for one; sometimes it reflects itself even in the bodily posture and appearance of the man who has acquired it, for such a man always behaves in a disciplined and polite manner, is modest and humble, and seems to be "broken-hearted", that is to say, one who has lost all vanity and self-love. If a man does not bear genuine humility and fear of Allah in his heart, he does not, with all his external modesty and downcast looks, really possess the quality of Khushu (humbleness of heart). In fact, it is not proper even to show the signs of Khushu' in one's behavior deliberately. On seeing a young man sitting with his head bowed down, the rightly-guided Khalifah Sayyidna 'Umar (RA) said:

"Raise your head! Humbleness of heart

is in the heart."

Ibrahim Nakha'i has said:

"Humbleness of heart does not mean wearing rough clothes, eating coarse food and keeping the head bowed down. Humbleness of heart is to treat the high and the low alike in matters of truth, and to keep the heart free to devote itself entirely to Allah and to the performance of what Allah has made obligatory for you."

Similarly, Hasan of Basra has said:

"The Caliph 'Umar would speak loudly enough to be heard, whenever he spoke, would walk swiftly, whenever he walked, and would strike forcefully, whenever he struck a man. All the same, he undoubtedly was a man with a real humbleness of heart."

In short, wearing deliberately and by one's own choice, the looks of a man who possesses the humbleness of heart is a kind of self-delusion and a ruse of Satan, and hence reprehensible. But if a man happens to manifest such signs without knowing it, he can be excused. (Qurtubi)

Let us add that there is another word - Khudu' - which is often used along with Khushu', and which appears several times in the Holy Qur'an as well. The two words are almost syn-

onymous. But the word Khushu', according to its lexical root, refers to the lowering of the voice and of the glance when it is not artificial but arises out of a real modesty and fear of Allah - for example, the Holy Qur'an says: "Voices have been hushed" (20:108). On the other hand, the word "Khudu" refers to the bodily posture which shows modesty and humility - for example, the Holy Qur'an says:

"So their necks will stay humbled to it." (26:4)

We must also define as to what, in the eyes of the Shari'ah, the exact position and value of Khushu' is with regard to Salah. The Holy Qur'an and the Hadith repeatedly stress its importance as in:

"And perform the prayer for the sake of My remembrance." (20:14)

Obviously, forgetfulness is the opposite of remembrance and hence the man who becomes unmindful of Allah while offering Salah, is not fulfilling the obligation of remembering Allah. Another verse says:

"Do not be among the unmindful." (7:205)

Similarly, the Holy Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said:

"The Salah simply means self-abasement and humility."

Says another hadith:

"If his prayers do not restrain a man from immodesty and evil, he goes farther and farther away from Allah."

Salah offered unmindfully does not obviously restrain man from evil deeds, and consequently such a man goes far-

ther and farther away from Allah.

Having quoted these verses and hadiths in support of other arguments in his Ihya' al-'Ulum, Imam al-Ghazali suggests that Khushu' must then be a necessary condition for Salah, and that its acceptability must depend on it. He adds that, according to the blessed Companion, Mu'adh ibn Jabal (RA) and jurists as great as Sufyan al-Thawri and Hasan al-Basri, Salah offered without Khushu' is not valid.

On the other hand, the four great Imams of Islamic jurisprudence and most of the jurists do not hold Khushu' to be a necessary condition for Salah. In spite of considering it to be the very essence of Salah, they say that the only condition necessary in this respect is that while saying Allahu Akbar at the beginning of the prayers one should turn with all one's heart to Allah, and have the intention (niyyah) of offering the prayers only for the sake of Allah; if one does not attain Khushu' in the rest of the prayers, one will not get any reward for that part of the prayers, but, from the point of view of Fiqh (jurisprudence) one will not be charged with having forsaken Salah, nor will one be liable to the punishment which is meted out to those who give up prescribed prayers without a valid excuse.

Imam al-Ghazali has provided an explanation for this divergence of view. The Fuqaha' (jurists), he points out, are not concerned with inner qualities and states of the heart (Ahwal), but only enunciate the exo-

teric regulations of the Shari'ah on the basis of the external actions of men's physical organs - it does not lie within the jurisdiction of Fiqh to decide whether one will get a reward for a certain deed in the other world or not. Khushu being an inner state, they have not prescribed it as a necessary condition for the total duration Of Salah, but have made the validity of the prayers depend on the lowest degree of Khushu turning, as one begins the prayers, with one's heart to Allah and having the intention of only worshipping Him.

There is another explanation for not making Khushu' a necessary condition for the total duration of the prayers. In certain other verses, the Holy Qur'an has clearly enunciated the principle which governs legislation in religious matters: nothing is made obligatory for men that should be beyond their endurance and power. Now, except for a few gifted individuals, men in general are incapable of maintaining Khushu' for the total duration of the prayers; so, in order to avoid compelling men to a task they cannot accomplish, the Fuqaha' have made Khushu' a necessary condition only for the beginning of the prayers, and not for the whole duration.

In concluding the discussion, Imam al-Ghazali remarks that in spite of the great importance of Khushu' one can depend on the infinite mercy of Allah, and hope that the man who offers his prayers unmindful will not be counted among those who

give up the prayer altogether, for he has tried to fulfil the obligation, has turned his heart away from everything to concentrate his attention on Allah even for a few moments, and has been mindful of Allah alone at least while forming his intention for the prayers. Offering one's prayers in this half-hearted manner has, to say the least, the merit of keeping one's name excluded from the list of those who habitually disobey Allah and forsake the prescribed prayers altogether.

In short, this is a matter in which hope and fear both are involved - there is the fear of having incurred punishment as well as the hope of being ultimately forgiven. So, one should try one's best to get rid of one's laziness and indifference. But it is the mercy of Allah alone which can help one to succeed in this effort.

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who adjudged it forbidden. Thus his station was elevated in the eyes of the Sultan.

History is filled with such scenarios.

Let one's intentions, then, be sincerely for Allah, even if it comes at the cost of the disapproval of people, or people shall surely go back to Allah and stand before Him in a state of complete humility and meekness.

Moreover, let none displease the Creator, for most surely people will despise him in the end for it, and thus shall he lose his prospects both for this life and the next.

A Discourse on the Colonized Muslim Subject

Dr. Hatem Bazian

Today's events in the Muslim world [are] chaotic and incoherent if we fail to account for the past two hundred years of modern history and the entanglement with colonialism and then the emergence of post-colonial nation-states. Often, Muslims are instructed to let go of the past and stop complaining about colonialism and using it as an excuse to explain away the current state of affairs. The logic goes that colonialism has ended and the Muslim world has been independent for the last 40-60 years. Thus the argument goes to offer the conclusion that the Muslim world should take responsibility for its own affairs and inherent failures rather than continue to blame colonialism and the West in general.

Such argument, if accepted, also gives credence to the orientalist trope postulating the inherent inferiority of the Muslim world and the inability to deal with its serious problems. The thesis is centered on the assumption that colonialism has ended with the withdrawal of colonial troops and the achievement of independence across all parts of the Muslim world with the exception of Palestine (prior to the invasion of Afghanistan by the Russians and Americans; also Iraq). This assumption hinges on a very rudimentary and igno-

rant understanding of colonialism and its multi-layered approach to control and domination. The military component is a small part of a larger and complex epistemologically entangled structure the intent of which was to achieve total control and domination with and, for sure, without the presence of boots on the ground.

The crudest control structures are those utilizing material chains to force the human physical form into confinement within a space and restrictions on movement. However, the most sophisticated structures operate on the mental sub-conscious level and attempt to achieve total domination over the mind and the intellectual capacity to conceptualize the self and its agency in the world. In these structures, the control is over the mental abilities to conceptualize and draw the needed mental maps of the world and the solution to its multifaceted problems. The extent of colonial success can be measured by the level of mental adherence to colonial structures in the colonized population and its intellectual production that continues to replicate its internalized domination despite the removal of the physical chains.

Thus, one way to rationalize the colonization becomes a very simple equation that you are colonized because you

are inferior and susceptible to external domination and control. Such a view assigns responsibility to the victim and colonization is rationalized in a Darwinian type of structure and the survival of the fittest being the operable logic. Furthermore, the argument only examines the outer form and visible outcomes rather than paying attention to the over-all structures that made it possible for the colonial project to register successes and to be transmitted over generations. Even when states advance on the material levels they are still structurally subject to colonial discourses since the measures of success are subject to a colonial typography and not outside of it.

A second aspect to rationalize continued colonial discourses is located in a religious debate offering Islam's supposed backwardness as the reason or cause of colonial domination and control as well as the source of current problems. This produces the constant colonial demand for an Islamic reform epistemic that can/may transform Islam into a projected 'enlightened' modernity that is informed and measured by a colonial Eurocentric yardstick. To be modern and reformist is to accept Islam's inherent inferiority as set per colonial discourses and then embark on a colonized reform mode that answers all the questions that are not asked by or for Muslims in the first place.

Certainly, the colonial epistemic is racial and material emerging out of specific European historical experience that is then universalized and transformed into the norm to be emulated across the world. The structure gets imprinted in the educational, development and 'civilizational' projects across the global south and made operational to re-

produce and regularize inferiority with or without the presence of colonial boots on the ground. The colonial power asserts and maintains its superior nature because of an inherent biological and intellectual evolution that created the needed human pre-conditions for civilization, which is for sure found lacking in the colonized populations of the South, Muslims included.

In this context, the colonial project far from seeking to elevate the sub-human into a fully 'civilized' human is centered on maintaining the Eurocentric racial, intellectual and religious hierarchy intact while constituting the superior race as an object of material deification. The deification imprinted on the colonized mind is so powerful and all encompassing thus rendering the post-colonial period a mere reflective image constructed within the same mentally formed colonial epistemic. The more the colonial is the thought to be in the distant past the more it asserts itself in the present but in more complex and distorted ways. The past is never past as long as it continues to be reproduced and acted upon in the present. We are in the 'present colonial' despite hypothesizing of a colonial past.

A Muslim today is a byproduct of a colonial mental mapping that makes it possible for the person to see him/herself only through a projected colonially constructed imprint. To ask who is a Muslim today is a difficult question since self-identification and entanglement with an idealized past 'tradition' is navigated through a colonial topography that produces and reproduces a dynamically constructed inferiority matrix.

Seeded colonial debates about the Islamic 'tradition', 'reform',

‘interpretations’, ‘gender roles’, ‘power’, ‘state’, ‘economics’, ‘violence’ and rights are all colonial imprints and operate within the colonially crafted epistemic rather than being an expression of Muslim agency. Further, the constant demarcation between political Islam and Islam, Sufism and non-Sufism, modern and traditional, extremist and moderate are all shaped by colonially crafted binary epistemic relating to religion as theorized and experienced in the European context that is then universalized and constituted as the norm for all ‘sub-human’ colonized subjects and distant colonies to emulate. Islam in the colonial framework is the constant ‘sub-human and uncivilized marker’, rather than being representative of a coherent and fully developed system having its distinctive epistemology and meanings.

The mental colonial project fosters an imitative imprint on the mind of the colonized to be nurtured into producing a state of self-helplessness and exclusively remedied through constant intervention by the colonial master or his internally assigned and intellectually trained (miss-educated) agents. We have interventions in every facet of life, under all pretexts and rationalizations including humanitarian imperial projects and the new modes of utilizing the NGO’s industrial complex to push softer neoliberal civilizational projects.

You, the colonial subject, is unable to develop because it is you who is unable and not ready to do so and not I, the colonial master that is disrupting the progress so as to keep the flow of wealth to the north. Today, the colonial master/consultant/advisor says you can aspire to

be ‘me’ once you let go of your backward ‘tradition’ and imitate what I have accomplished for it is the only road to become a superior and emerge out of your darkened inferiority. This colonial project is operative in politics, economics, social relations, media and religious discourses in the colonies. The outcome is an eraser of the mental framing and epistemic structures that existed and supported colonized societies for centuries to be replaced by a colonized knowledge rooted in structuring internalized inferiority.

‘I am inferior therefore I can’t’, would become the operable imprint on the colonized mind and needing the agency of the colonial master to start-up any initiative and draw meanings out of his/her life. Even when the colonized think on his/her own they are but recalling the colonial knowledge imprinted on the mind and become even more imitative despite thinking that they have achieved independence or asserted ones own agency. In this way, the colonized become doubly victimized in the colonial process, once through direct colonization and the second by dominating the subconscious to produce a false agency and a false self-identification. The world becomes colonial in the post-colonial and independence is shaped by the colonial epistemic and to never stray away from it. The first act of Muslim de-colonization is in the mind and it involves first emptying out the colonial, post-colonial and Eurocentric nationalist edifice then setting out to imagine a de-colonial Muslim world and through it shape the future.

Courtesy of Lamppost Education Initiative

Sincerity

Sheikh Abdul Qadir Jeelani (ra)

O young man, you must work sincerely for Allah (mighty and glorified is He), in your prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, giving obligatory alms, and all of your deeds. Have a pledge with Him before your arrival to Him. This pledge is nothing less than sincerity, belief in the oneness of God, following the Sunna and the Islamic community, patience, thankfulness, entrusting Allah with your affairs, rejecting the creatures and seeking Him, and turning away from anything other than Him and advancing to Him with your heart and your innermost being. No doubt, He will give you in this world nearness to Him, longing for Him, and loving Him, and in the hereafter He will give you of His nearness and favors what no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and has never occurred to any human being.

O sincere one, run away from the association of partners with Allah to the door of your Lord. Stop at it and do not escape when tribulations come. If you stood at His door and tribulations came to you from your rear, cling to the door, for they will be fended off from you by your belief in the oneness of God and the charisma of your truthfulness. When tribulations come to you, resort to patience and steadfastness and recite these

words of Allah (mighty and glorified is He):

"Allah confirms those who believe with the firm word in the life of this world and in the hereafter" (from 14.27);

His (high is He) following Utterance:

"So Allah will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower" (from 2.137);

and His following words:

"is Allah not sufficient for His servant?" (from 39.36).

Say frequently:

"There is no might or strength but by Allah, the High, the Great" (la hawla wa la quwwata ilia billahi al-'Aliyi al-'Adhfm),

and frequently ask for forgiveness and glorify the Lord. Remember the True One (mighty and glorified is He). By truthfulness you will be protected from the army of tribulations and the army of the lower self, passion, and Satan. How well I know you, and how little you know me!

"He whom Allah guides is rightly guided" (from 18.17).

"And he whom Allah guides will have none to mislead him" (from 39.37).

"He whom Allah sends astray there is no guide for him" (from 7.186).

Our Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) used to love and wish that those who had gone astray would accept guidance, so

Allah revealed this to him:

“You do not guide whom you like but it is Allah who guides whom He wills” (from 28.56).

So he (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

“I have been sent with guidance, but guidance is not under my control. And Satan tempts people, yet temptation is not under his control.”

The belief of the followers of the Book and the Sunna of the Messenger of Allah (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) is that the sword does not cut because of its nature, but it is rather Allah (mighty and glorified is He) who cuts with it; that the fire does not burn because of its nature, but it is rather Allah (mighty and glorified is He) who burns with it; that food does not satisfy hunger because of its nature, but it is rather Allah (mighty and glorified is He) who satisfies hunger with it; and that water does not quench thirst because of its nature, but it is rather Allah (mighty and glorified is He) who quenches thirst with it. The same applies to all things of all kinds; it is Allah (mighty and glorified is He) who uses them to produce their effects while they are only instruments in His hand with which He does whatever He wills. When Abraham the Intimate (prayer and peace be on our Prophet and on him) was cast into the fire and the True One (mighty and glorified is He) wanted that the fire would not burn him, He made it “coolness and safety” (from 21.69) to him. It is rightly reported that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) has said:

“On the Day of Resurrection, the Fire will say: ‘Pass through, O believer, for

your light has put out my flames”!

The slave may need to be beaten with the stick, whereas a sign is sufficient for the freeman to understand.

O you who worship with an absent heart, your likeness is as the likeness of a donkey that has its eyes blindfolded while turning the mill! It thinks that it has walked many miles when in fact it has not left its place. Woe to you! You stand up and sit down in your prayer, and suffer hunger and thirst in your fasting, yet without having a single atom of sincerity and belief in the oneness of God; what benefit would you derive from this? What would you earn other than weariness? You pray and fast while the eye of your heart is on what other people have in their houses, in their pockets, and on their plates. You look at them in the hope that they may present you with gifts, you show them your worship acts, and let them know of your fast and strife.

O you who have made the creatures as partners to Allah, what you have are worthless! Turn back from your attribution of partners to Allah. O hypocrite, O dissimulator, O you who have turned away from the attributes of the truthful, spiritual, godly ones! Have you not realized that I scrutinize you, have authority over you, and ask you for evidence on your claims? The Prophet (Allah's prayer and peace be on him) is reported to have said: “If the claims of people were to be accepted without evidence, some people would claim the blood and property of others. But the evidence must be provided by the claimant and the oath is required of the person who denies it.”

How much you talk and how little you act! Reverse your actions in order to succeed. When someone comes to know Allah (mighty and glorified is He), his tongue will stop moving, his heart will start to speak, his innermost being will become pure and serene, and his status will raise in His sight. He will feel intimacy and find comfort with Him and he will find Him sufficient for all his needs, to the exclusion of everyone else.

O fire of the hearts, be coolness and safety! O hearts, get ready for the day on which the mountains will be removed and the earth will be made to appear in full view. The real man is one who, on that day, will stand steadfast on the feet of his faith in his Lord, his trust in his Lord, his love for his Lord, and his longing for his Lord; on the feet of his knowingness of Him in this world before the hereafter. The mountains of the means and the creatures will be removed, whereas the mountains of the Creator of all means will remain in place. The mountains of the kings of the outward and the images will be removed and vanish, whereas the mountains of the kings of the inward will appear and stand firm. The Day of Resurrection is the day of change and replacement. These mountains at whose strength, hardness, and great size you marvel will become like carded wool and will be uprooted. Their hardness will vanish and they will be made to move faster than the clouds. The sky will become like "muht" (from 70.8), which is molten copper. The nature of the earth and the sky will totally change. The bout of this world will be over — that is the bout of the Law, the bout

of deeds, the bout of planting, the bout of duties. The bout of the hereafter will come — that is the bout of destiny, the bout of rewarding according to deeds, the bout of the harvest, the bout of rest from duties, the bout of giving every rightful owner what he has the right to, the bout of giving everyone who deserves favors his entitlement. O Allah, grant our hearts and our limbs and senses steadfastness on that day and "give us good in this world and good in the hereafter and protect us from the torment of the Fire."

You have to practice sincerity. Pray for the sake of Allah not for the sake of His creatures. Fast for the sake of Allah not for the sake of His creatures. Live in this world for His sake not for the sake of His creatures or for the sake of yourselves. When performing any act of obedience, be devoted to Allah not to His creatures. You will not be able to perform righteous deeds with sincerity unless you practice the curtailment of hopes. You will be able to curtail hopes only by remembering death. You will not be able to remember death unless you see the ruined graves and reflect on their dwellers and what they were involved in. Sit at the destroyed graves and say to yourselves: "Those used to eat, drink, have sexual intercourse, dress up, and amass worldly things. What is their state of affairs now? What benefit would all of that bring them? They do not have with them other than whatever good deeds they did."

There are among you, O people of this town, those who do not believe

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The Pleasures of Paradise

M. Abdus-Salam

Cont'd from previous issue

The Eternalness of the Hereafter

The Pleasures of this world are transient whilst the joys of the hereafter are lasting and eternal. In this life when a person enjoys something, it is only a short while before they get bored with it and proceed to search for something they feel is better, or they may not feel a need for it altogether. As for the delights of Paradise, a person will never feel bored with anything, but rather, its goodness will increase each time they indulge in it.

Also, the life of this world is very short. Humans only live on this earth for a short while, and very few people reach the age of seventy.

"...Say: Short is the enjoyment of this world. The Hereafter is (far) better for him who fears God..." (Quran 4:77)

As for Paradise, people will live forever. God says:

"...its provision is eternal and so is its shade..." (Quran 13:35)

"What is with you must vanish, and what is with God will endure ..." (Quran 16:96)

"(It will be said to them): This is Our Provision, which will never finish" (Quran 38:54)

Superior Delights

The delights of the people of Paradise, such as their clothing, food, drink,

jewelry and palaces, will be far superior to their counterparts in this world. There is in fact no room for comparison, as even the smallest space in Paradise is better than this world and all that is in it. The Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him, said:

"The space of the bow of any one of you in Paradise is better than all that the sun rises upon" (Mishkaat al-Masaabeeh 3/85, no. 5615)

Free from all Impurities

Paradise is free from all the impurities of this world. Eating and drinking in this life results in the need for excretion and its associated unpleasant odors. If a person drinks wine in this world, he loses his mind. Women in this world menstruate and give birth, which are sources of pain and hurt. Paradise is free from all of these discomforts: its people will not urinate, defecate, spit or suffer from catarrh. The wine of Paradise, as described by its Creator, is:

"Crystal-white, delicious to those who drink (thereof), free from intoxication, nor will they suffer intoxication therefrom" (Quran 37:46-47)

The water of Paradise does not become brackish, and its milk never changes in flavor:

"...rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never chang-

es...” (Quran 47:15)

The women of Paradise are pure and free from menstruation, postnatal bleeding and all the other impurities suffered by women in this world, and all are free from stool and feces. God says:

“...and they shall have therein purified mates...” (Quran 2:25)

The prophet answered a person when they asked how the people of Paradise will relieve themselves:

“They relieve themselves by perspiring through their skins, and its fragrance will be that of musk, and all stomachs will have become lean.” (ibn Hibbaan)

What we have mentioned has been a mere comparison in order to understand the nature of Paradise, but as God said, its delights are truly hidden:

“No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy, as a reward for what they used to do.” (Quran 32:17)

Paradise: There is Nothing Like It

The delights of Paradise surpass the imagination and defy description. They are like nothing known to the people of this world; no matter how advanced we may become, what we achieve is as nothing in comparison with the joys of the Hereafter. As is mentioned in several reports, there is nothing like Paradise:

“It is sparkling light, aromatic plants, a lofty palace, a flowing river, ripe fruit, a beautiful wife and abundant clothing, in an eternal abode of radiant joy, in beautiful soundly-constructed high houses”.

(Ibn Maaajah, Ibn Hibbaan)

The Sahabah asked the Prophet about the buildings of Paradise and he replied with a wonderful description:

“Bricks of gold and silver, and mortar of

fragrant musk, pebbles of pearl and sapphire, and soil of saffron. Whoever enters it is filled with joy and will never feel miserable; he will live there forever and never die; their clothes will never wear out and their youth will never fade.” (Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, ad-Daarimee)

God says:

“And when you look there (in Paradise) you will see a delight (that cannot be imagined), and a great dominion.” (Quran 76:20)

What God has kept hidden from us the delights of Paradise is beyond our ability to comprehend. The Prophet said that God said:

“I have prepared for My slaves what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart can imagine.”

Recite if you wish:

“No person knows what is kept hidden for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.” (Quran 32:17)

In another report:

“Never mind what God has told you; what He has not told you is even greater.” (Saheeh Muslim)

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in the raising of the dead on the Day of Resurrection, adopting the doctrine of dahriyya, but they hide their belief in fear of being killed. I know a group of them, but I view you by the Law of Allah (mighty and glorified is He) and conceal what I know about you for the sake of the Knowledge of Allah (mighty and glorified is He). I view you one by one but turn a blind eye to you. O Allah, draw a veil over our shortcomings, forgive us, and grant us guidance, sufficiency, and care! Amen.

World's Philosophical Systems that Failed Us

An American Catholic, who wants to be known only by his initials, N.K., rejected his faith in Christianity and took to philosophy. Not happy with this either, he went on to study Islam where he found answers to many of his unanswered questions. He eventually accepted Islam. Here he describes his journey into Islam:

I studied at Chicago, where I became aware through studies of philosophical moral systems that philosophy had not been successful in the past at significantly influencing peoples morals and preventing injustice, and I came to realize that there was little hope for it to do so in the future. I found that comparing human cultural systems and societies in their historical succession and multiplicity had led many intellectuals to moral relativism, since no moral value could be discovered which on its own merits was transculturally valid, a reflection leading to nihilism, the perspective that sees human civilizations as plants that grow out of the earth, springing from their various seeds and soils, thriving for a time, and then dying away.

Some heralded this as intellectual liberation, among them Emile Durkheim in his "Elementary Forms of the Religious Life," or Sigmund Freud in his "Totem and Taboo," which discussed mankind as if it were a patient and diagnosed its religious traditions as a form of

a collective neurosis that we could now hope to cure, by applying to them a thorough scientific atheism, a sort of salvation through pure science.

On this subject, I bought the Jeremy Shapiro translation of "Knowledge and Human Interests" by Jurgen Habermas, who argued that there was no such thing as pure science that could be depended upon to forge boldly ahead in a steady improvement of itself and the world. He called such a misunderstanding scientism, not science. Science in the real world, he said, was not free of values, still less of interests. The kinds of research that obtain funding, for example, were a function of what their society deemed meaningful, expedient, profitable, or important. Habermas had been of a generation of German academics who, during the 30s and 40s, knew what was happening in their country, but insisted they were simply engaged in intellectual production, that they were living in the realm of scholarship, and need not concern themselves with whatever the state might choose to do with their research. The horrible question mark that was attached to German intellectuals when the Nazi atrocities became public after the war made Habermas think deeply about the ideology of pure science. If anything was obvious, it was that the 19th-century optimism of thinkers like Freud and Durkheim was no longer tenable.

I began to reassess the intellectual life around me. Like Schopenhauer, I felt that higher education must produce higher human beings. But at the university, I found lab people talking to each other about forging research data to secure funding for the coming year; luminaries who wouldn't permit tape recorders at their lectures for fear that competitors in the same field would go one step further with their research and beat them to publication; professors vying with each other in the length of their courses syllabuses. The moral qualities I was accustomed to associate with ordinary, unregenerate humanity seemed as frequently met with in sophisticated academics as they had been in fishermen. If one could laugh at fishermen who, after getting a boatload of fish in a big catch, would cruise back and forth in front of the others to let them see how laden down in the water they were, ostensibly looking for more fish; what could one say about the Ph.D.s who behaved the same way about their books and articles? I felt that their knowledge had not developed their persons, that the secret of higher man did not lie in their sophistication.

I wondered if I hadn't gone down the road of philosophy as far as one could go. While it had debunked my Christianity and provided some genuine insights, it had not yet answered the big questions. Moreover, I felt that this was somehow connected I didn't know whether as cause or effect to the fact that our intellectual tradition no longer seemed to seriously comprehend itself. What were any of us, whether philosophers, fishermen, garbage-men, or kings, except bit players in a drama we did not understand, diligently playing out our roles until our replacements were sent, and

we gave our last performance? But could one legitimately hope for more than this? I read "Kojves Introduction to the Reading of Hegel," in which he explained that for Hegel, philosophy did not culminate in the system, but rather in the Wise Man, someone able to answer any possible question on the ethical implications of human actions. This made me consider our own plight in the 20th century, which could no longer answer a single ethical question.

It was thus as if this century's unparalleled mastery of concrete things had somehow ended by making us things. I contrasted this with Hegel's concept of the concrete in his "Phenomenology of Mind." An example of the abstract, in his terms, was the liminary physical reality of the book now held in your hands, while the concrete was its interconnection with the larger realities it presupposed, the modes of production that determined the kind of ink and paper in it, the aesthetic standards that dictated its color and design, the systems of marketing and distribution that had carried it to the reader, the historical circumstances that had brought about the readers literacy and taste; the cultural events that had mediated its style and usage; in short, the bigger picture in which it was articulated and had its being. For Hegel, the movement of philosophical investigation always led from the abstract to the concrete, to the more real. He was therefore able to say that philosophy necessarily led to theology, whose object was the ultimately real. This seemed to me to point up an irreducible lack in our century. I began to wonder if, by materializing our culture and our past, we had not some-

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Are You a Hijabi Barbie?

Aishah Ahmed

“And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment...” [Surah an-Nur, 24:31]

I will not sugar coat my words. That has been done enough already. It is time that we take the words of Allah seriously. Why do we find it difficult to abide by the rules of Allah ? Why do we somehow choose a middle path which looks alright to us on the surface but deep down, we know that it is not “OK”?

Hijabi But Not *Hijabi*

The ayah mentioned in the beginning is very clear. There is absolutely no ambiguity- Cover yourselves such that you do not reveal anything. But we being the “smart” generation have changed the definition of “reveal”. Let us take a sneak peak at the various trends in the world of hijabis today and find out if we are the Hijabi Barbie : “We have covered ourselves!” We find sisters, covered from head to toe, with nothing other than their face and hands visible. You may ask, “What is the problem?” The issue

is that they can be referred to as being covered with clothes, but subhanAllah, the tightness of their clothes leaves nothing to the imagination! Every feature of their body is displayed ‘wrapped’ in tight clothes. And these sisters are quick to retort, “We are not revealing anything!”

The underlying problem seems to be that most of us feel that simply covering our hair with a piece of cloth is called *hijaab*. No, this is not true.

Take some time and look at how Allah has used words to describe the *hijaab* for women. He does not simply say ‘dress modestly’, but has also outlined the type of clothes we should be draped in. If you think deeply about the reason for this, you will realize that the definition of modesty varies from culture to culture.

Let us take a simple example from the Asian Sub continent to illustrate this. An Indian woman wearing a *saree* may consider a girl in a mini skirt as immodest, while forgetting that the *saree* she herself has draped reveals her entire midriff, back and chest area. But that is the culture of her country and she finds nothing wrong in it! In fact, the *saree* is a modest dress according to her.

This is how our mind functions

and Allah, al-‘Alim, knows our limitations. He has therefore used specific terms such as *khimar*, *jilbab* and *hijab* to describe the dress code for the Muslimah.

Hijab and Haya

Another misconception that people usually have about the hijab is that it is something physical. This is not true either. **Hijab is the veil that has to be drawn over our body, our behavior and our speech.** If we observe the proper ‘physical’ rules of hijab, yet have no constraint on our deeds and actions, and involve in haraam activities, what purpose has the covering served?

The Camel Hump Trend

I immediately remember my cousin when this topic is raised. She was visiting the Gulf (where this trend is quite common) and the first thing she told me was; “Now I understand what the camel hump is, which the Prophet referred to in his hadith.” We need to ask ourselves the question that who are we trying to please, Allah or others? The humps on our head get higher, the makeup gets heavier, the perfume gets denser, the clothes get tighter, yet we claim we are in hijab. Is our hijab making every glance turn in our direction? Is our attire dissuading people to look at us or is it inviting them? There is no special jury verdict required for this question! Our hijab should automatically create a sense of haya in us. We are not an item on public display for people to look and admire. Allah has blessed us with internal and external

beauty to preserve and not to be tarnished. If we are truly dressed in the sense Allah has instructed us to, both internally and externally, people will refrain from even looking at you, let alone harm you. The reasons may differ – some out of respect, some out of disinterest and some out of contempt – but at the end, the purpose is served. You remain protected like a pearl in its shell, beautiful, mesmerizing, radiant and untouched.

Allah highlights another purpose of hijab in Surah al-Ahzaab, “you will be known”. This is quite interesting. Ibn Katheer in his Tafseer says that, “.....it will be known that they are free, and that they are not servants or whores.”

Allah has shown us the precise yet subtle manner of being the ambassador of Islam. **The hijab is our uniform, our badge of honor, our pride.** We have to hold onto this badge with love, commitment and sincerity and let the world know that we are not suppressed but choose to cover ourselves modestly. I leave you with this simple question which I need to answer as well: “If we claim that our hijab is modest enough and that we are covered appropriately, then why do we put on the loose jalaabeeb available in the prayer rooms before we stand for Salaah? Is Allah watching us only during our Salaah? Do we forget that He continues to watch us even when we leave our homes as “Hijabi Barbies”?” Please share your thoughts about this article in the comments section below. We would love to hear what you have to say.

Wrong and Right

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzi (ra)
Translator: Omar Abdl Haleem

Wrong is wrong even if everyone is doing it
Right is right even if only you are doing it

The rational man is careful to uphold the positions of Allah even when it angers people. For he who takes the side of another at the price of the rights of the Creator, Allah turns the heart of the one he sought to please against him and makes that person despise him.

Al-Ma'mun [the third-century Abbasid caliph] once said to his retinue: "Do not disobey Allah by obeying me, lest Allah set me upon you." Now, Al-Ma'mun decreed the execution of his brother Al-Amin. Yet Tahir ibn Al-Husayn was excessive in carrying this out, for he dismembered him and put his head upon a shaft for public display. Even though Al-Ma'mun had ordered the execution, the traces of this excess remained in his heart, such that Al-Ma'mun became unable to look upon Tahir.

One day, Tahir entered upon Al-Ma'mun at court. Al-Ma'mun saw him and wept. Tahir said to him: "Why weep thou thus, may Allah never let your eyes weep [in sadness]. For, indeed, the people of all the lands have hailed you as rightful ruler?"

Al-Ma'mun replied: "I weep for a reason whose mention is humiliation, whose secreting is grief, and

which will leave none without sorrow."

Tahir then exited the court, and giving two-hundred thousand dirhams to a servant of Al-Ma'mun named Husayn, he bade him find out why Al-Ma'mun wept when he saw him. When Al-Ma'mun ate the mid-morning meal (al-ghada) he said: "O Husayn! Give me water!"

"No, by Allah!" said Husayn, "I will not give you your water until you tell me why you wept when Tahir entered your presence."

"O Husayn! How is it that you have cared so dearly about this, such that you beseech me for its sake?"

"It is owing to my distress at seeing you cry," Husayn said.

"O Husayn! If what I tell you ever leaves your lips, I will put you to death."

"O my master! When have I ever divulged any secret of yours?"

"I remembered my brother Muhammad Al-Amin and the humiliation that befell him. My recurring remembrance of it has enraged me. I seek relief from it in my flowing tears. Thus harm shall befall Tahir from me."

When Husayn informed Tahir of this, the latter rode to Ahmad ibn

Abi Khalid and said to him: "Indeed, a good deed is never wasted with me. So hide me from the eye of Al-Ma'mun."

"I shall," he said.

So Abu Khalid entered upon Al-Ma'mun and said: "I slept not last night." "Why could you not sleep?" Al-Ma'mun asked.

"Because you gave Ghassan ibn Abbas rule over Central Asia, and I fear that the Turkic people will attack him and overrun him."

"Who, then, do you see fit for this position?" said Al-Ma'mun.

"Tahir ibn al-Husain," said Abû Khalid.

So Al-Ma'mun agreed and Tahir left for Central Asia.

There, Tahir remained the ruler for a time. Eventually, he stopped making du'ca' for Al-Ma'mun on the minbar (pulpit) during the Friday Salah. The man responsible for reporting back to Al-Ma'mun informed Tahir: "You did not pray for Amir Al-Mu'minin (the Commander of the Believers)." Tahir replied: "I forgot. So do not report it."

In the following khuṭba, however, and the one after that Tahir again failed to pray for Al-Ma'mun. So the man told Tahir: "I must report this now, for if I do not, the merchants who travel between Central Asia (Khurasan) and Iraq will inform him."

When the news of this reached Al-Ma'mun, he summoned Ahmad ibn Abi Khalid and said: "It has not gone unnoticed that you have deceived me about Tahir, and I have made a covenant to Allah that if you do not bring him before me, your punishment will be miserable."

Thus Ahmad ibn Abi Khalid

departed in search of Tahir, reproaching himself along the way until he reached the province of Al-Ray whereupon he received the news of Tahir's passing. So much for the one who supports others against the rights of Allah.

The opposite of person who defends others against the prescriptions of Allah is one who is careful to take the side of truth and what is right, for the sincere believer who is angered by such a person will ultimately be pleased with him.

Thus the Wazeir (minister) Al-Walid ibn Habirah told me personally how he reached that rank. He said that Al-Mustanjid-billah once wrote him while Al-Mustanjid was the waliy al-ahd (caliphal heir). Al-Mustanjid requested that the contents of the letter be hidden from his father (the Caliph). When the letter reached Al-Walid, and he was informed before reading it that he was to conceal it from the Caliph, Al-Walid said: "By Allah! I will not read it."

When Al-Mustanjid became caliph, and Al-Walid entered his court he said: "The greatest evidence of my truthfulness and my sincerity is that I was loyal to your father when he was Khalifah. You requested me to collude with you, and I refused." Al-Mustanjid replied: "You have spoken the truth. I deem you to be my [best choice of] Wazir."

Similarly, when the Sultan asked the jurists if it was permissible for him to have the title Malik Al-Muluk (King of Kings) all the jurists deemed it permissible, save Mawardi,

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How Much do We Know

Amer Haleem

Two Ayahs that run together in the Quran “film” for us the arresting parable of those who do not follow the prophets or put their faith in the knowledge they have taught us. Fittingly, these verses are cast in the Divine Light of Sûrat Al-Nûr.

Watch the Quran’s inimitable linguistic cinematography shimmer into the perfect imagery of the world’s benighted in action and then glimmer with the profoundly powerful experience of the visualization of the beclouded from behind their own eyes. Read it slowly:

As for those who have disbelieved, their works are like a mirage in a leveled plain. The thirsting man thinks it is water—until when he approaches it he finds that it is nothing. Instead, in the Hereafter, he shall find only Allah there. Then shall Allah render him his wicked account in full. For Allah is swift in reckoning.

Or they are like one lost within veils of darkness in a fathomless sea covered by waves, above which are waves, above which are thick clouds—veils of darkness, one above the other. Should he thrust out his hand, barely would he see it. For one to whom Allah does not provide light, he has no light at all. [Sûrat Al-Nûr, 24:39-40]

Imam Ibn Taymiyya has astutely characterized the people whom this parable describes as “skeptical, perplexed, and ignorant of the truth,” and more often than not, “conceited in their ignorance.”

Misery to the divinely confounded, to be sure.
But pity be you and me.

For most of the people whose words, thoughts, and judgments we Muslims now ardently admire and emulate exactly inhabit this category of uncivilized disbelievers whose spiritual disarray and moral confusion these âyahs expose and condemn.

These are the ones whose writings we most quote. These are the teachers whose beliefs we urgently note and rehearse to our gatherings after we regurgitate them on our tests.

These are the opinion molders for whose “vision” we close our own eyes to take theirs as our own, the political leadership whose whirling direction we dervishly follow down any available lizard hole, the cultural trendsetters, whose fashion, flourish, and fickle faux rebellion we fancy ourselves as mimicking.

Is it any wonder, then, that we have become blind, dizzy dandies instead of farsighted, guided, solemnly dignified men?

The reason for our misguidance even though we are believers is simple. We lack knowledge. And our deficiency is self-inflicted. Moreover, we have chosen to not become knowledgeable in a very specific way.

Oh yes. We harbor a part of knowledge, the mathematics, medicine, agriculture, and commerce of the world. But what our fathers in faith before us termed “useful” knowledge, we now have very little of because that is knowledge bequeathed exclusively to the prophets and conveyed only, or in the best way, by them.

Prophetic knowledge. That is the pursuit which the world, and we rushing headlong after it, have abandoned. That is why we are misguided. That is why we follow the utterly deluded, disoriented disbelievers denounced by Allah in these two *âyahs*. Because they promise us what our hearts truly yearn for. They promise us the world.

Of course, they cannot give us what they promise. It does not belong to them, for one. They don’t know how to get it, truly, anyway, at least not in a way that does not destroy it even as they grasp for it. It is, indeed, a chimeric, a phantasm, a hallucination—like their power and their wealth and their hollowed out bodies propped up on the platforms of our virtual societies. Nothing they have is of any real substance.

It is true that we Muslims have the knowledge of belief, belief in the *tawhîd*, the oneness of Allah. That is because knowledge is of three kinds. One of these is that God exists. That He is One. That He has total knowledge and power, irresistible will

and infinite wisdom, and limitless mercy, as He chooses. We know this category of divine truth because Allah has made it self-evident within and without us and given us the reason and impulse to discern it in the life of the world.

Most of us still have this knowledge because our parents and community have made it tangibly available to us as an identity, even if only in its rudimentary form. Others of us have come to it through a mental search for the truth.

But as far as the details of this knowledge of *tawhîd*, things divine and the truths of religion, we remain largely unlettered. We are similar to the Quran’s description of the generally low level of religious knowledge among the Jews of Madinah at the time of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam). Rather, among them are the illiterate, having no knowledge of the Scripture other than vague fancies. Thus they do nothing but conjecture. [Sûrat Al-Baqarah, 2:78]

‘Illiterate’ here means with respect to divine revelation, *waḥy*. Such is the knowledge we and our world of being most direly need, or we will be destroyed. For revelation contains the full complement of moral knowledge that human beings need to conduct themselves rightly in the face of the conditions of the world and its vicissitudes.

The reason for this is that the perfected corpus of moral knowledge encoded in divine revelation exactly coincides with the truth, *al-ḥaqq*, that is the true substance with which Allah has created us and all creation. And the only source of this kind of

knowledge—the knowledge of things divine and the truths of religion, which are the truths of perpetual happiness—is the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam).

Again, Ibn Taymiyya:

He knows them best, is most eager to preach them to the masses, and most competent to formulate and expound them. He is above every human being in knowledge, will, and competence—virtues required to accomplish his mission perfectly. Everyone else is deficient in knowledge, has a distorted idea of things, or lacks the urge to preach what he knows either because he is seeking something else, harbors fears, or is bereft of sufficient power to expound his ideas clearly and forcefully in the face of, and to inure to, the conviction of the people.

It is only by the words delivered to us by the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that we can detail our belief in Allah, and so become enlightened in our thought and perception. And it is only by the conveyance of the Prophet that we can elevate our humanity through our specific comportment and behavior in the world in accordance with what he instructs us to do and uphold, and to refrain from and stand against.

The priests and presidents of the world cannot guide us. Its savants and saints will not help us. Its poets and beautiful people cast no model for us.

Life is all about coming to certainty. And that certainty lies only in the Quran—both in its perfect rational arguments and in its plainly stated miraculous truths and proofs—and in the tradition of its Messenger Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi

Wasallam), whose very life is wahy, both in its da'wah and demeanor, that is, in his spoken word, be it reasoned explanation or uttered truth, and in his proffered works, be they ritual or practical action.

If we do not know these—not about them, but these details themselves—and we waste our life and time chasing after the mirage-addled, or plunging in behind those drowning in the impenetrable darkness of an ocean of unbelief, then truly we know almost nothing and our tawhīd comes to naught.

Being Grateful for Passing Urine

Towards the end of his life, Hazrat Maulana Ahmad Shah Saahib (ra) suffered some type of a sickness affecting his bladder. He passed urine by using a tube attached to a bottle, which he held in his hands. He even had to travel in this condition.

Someone once asked him: "What is the cause of this sickness?"

"My evil actions," he lamented.

Puzzled, the man asked: "What evil actions are you talking about?"

"For years on end, I was able to pass urine a few times in a day with ease and comfort. However, not once did this ungrateful tongue of mine ever express gratitude to Allah for this favour of His. Which action can be more evil than this? Allah has warned us of His punishment for ingratitude:

"And if you are ungrateful, indeed My punishment is severe." (Surah Ebrahim,

Forgiveness

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: “All the children of Adam constantly err, but the best of those who constantly err are those who constantly repent.” [Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ahmad, Hakim]

We come to the next stage of gaining tranquility. Sometimes we don't know why we feel down. We talked about al-Jabbar, and how we should go to Allah to help mend our broken hearts. But sometimes it's more than that – it is the heavy weight of sins on our hearts. This topic may make us uncomfortable, because it is something we don't like to be reminded of. It is difficult to think of and face up to our sins – and it makes us even more depressed! But the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) taught us something very profound about the link between sins and the state of our heart. He says:

“When a slave commits a sin, a black spot appears on his heart...”

Subhan'Allah. When we commit sins, they weigh heavily on our hearts. Imagine a spiritual darkening of the heart due to the wrongs we commit – is it any wonder that we cannot pinpoint why we feel down? Yet the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) also told us of the cleanser for this:

“But if he gives it up, seeks forgiveness and repents, his heart will be cleansed...”

Of course, because it is difficult to pinpoint every wrong that we do, prayer is also a cleanser, as is wudhu. But for a

targeted cleansing, we need something more, because the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) continues:

“...but if he repeats it, (the blackness) will increase until it overwhelms his heart.” [Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah]

What we need is istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) and tawba (repentance) as the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said. Setting aside some time to sit back and reflect, seek forgiveness, and try not to commit that sin again is a way to improve ourselves and to realize how Allah is Merciful and Forbearing. Despite the fact that we commit wrongs, He has not punished us.

Sometimes we avoid apologizing to a human being because we feel we will be rejected, or that that person will make it very hard for us to be forgiven – so we end up just avoiding the situation. Sometimes the shame makes us unable to say sorry. But with Allah, there should be no fear of that. When we admit to our wrongs and make a conscious and sincere effort to ask forgiveness, Allah is ready to forgive our sins even if they are like mountains. It is amazing how the very act of returning to Allah, after we have committed a wrong, is itself an act of worship that Allah loves. Allah says in a hadith qudsi:

“O son of Adam, so long as you call upon Me and ask of Me, I shall forgive you for what you have done, and I shall not mind. O son of Adam, were your sins to reach the clouds of the sky and were you

then to ask forgiveness of Me, I would forgive you. O son of Adam, were you to come to Me with sins nearly as great as the earth and were you then to face Me, ascribing no partner to Me, I would bring you forgiveness nearly as great as it.” [Tirmidhi]

Sometimes we assume that it is only those who have committed grave sins that need to return to Allah. But the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

“Beware of minor sins. For they add on until they destroy a person.” [Ahmad, Tabarani]

Whatever stage we are at, we need istighfaar and true repentance. If the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) himself would seek forgiveness 70 times a day, why do we feel that we have to commit something that is especially egregious in order to ask Allah to forgive us? If we think about it, every sin is a black dot. These black dots accumulate until our hearts become hard and do not feel anymore. An example of this is with cussing or swearing. The first time we say something we shouldn't have, we feel this twinge of guilt in our heart. Then when we keep repeating it, it becomes normalized. Why? Because our hearts become enveloped in these black dots.

Yet when we constantly go back to Allah, seeking his forgiveness, we are reminded. We become humble, because we are forced to face these minor sins that weigh heavily on our hearts – and through that our hearts are cleansed, insha'Allah. Because we face our sins, we are constantly trying to improve; we do not become complacent. It may seem hard, but a load will be taken off our shoulders with this constant returning

to Allah. By doing this, we will have realized Allah's Names al-Ghaffar (the oft-Forgiving), al-Ghafoor (the Forgiving), at-Tawwaab (the One who constantly accepts repentance), ar-Raheem (the all-Merciful) – and we are essentially reaffirming our belief in His attributes. Look at this example of Allah's mercy when we commit sins. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) tells us in this hadith: “The Scribe on the left delays registering the sin of a Muslim for six hours. If he repents (within these six hours), and seeks Allah's forgiveness, they drop if off. If he doesn't, they write is down as a single sin.” [Tabarani]

Moreover, if we seek forgiveness sincerely and Allah accepts our repentance, not only does He forgive us, but He turns those bad deeds into good – imagine that YEARS of sinning could turn into years of REWARDS. How? Allah says in the Qur'an:

“Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work.

For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good.

And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.” [Qur'an, 25:70]

How could we not want to return to Allah, who is truly the Most merciful of those who show mercy?

Some ways of seeking forgiveness

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) taught 'Aisha (RA):

“Verily tawba (repentance) from sin is regretting the action] and seeking forgiveness.” [Bayhaqi]

The internal component is to regret what we have done – whether it is a small lie, a glance at something we shouldn't be looking at, being heedless or even something greater. The external

component is to ask Allah for forgiveness. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) taught us a few ways how, and these are two of them:

1. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said: "Whoever says it during the day with firm faith in it, and dies on the same day before the evening, he will be from the people of Paradise; and if somebody recites it at night with firm faith in it, and dies before the morning, he will be from the people of Paradise.

"O Allah! You are my Lord! None has the right to be worshiped but You. You created me and I am Your slave, and I am faithful to my covenant and my promise as much as I can. I seek refuge with You from all the evil I have done. I acknowledge before You all the blessings You have bestowed upon me, and I confess to You all my sins. So I entreat You to forgive my sins, for nobody can forgive sins except You." [Bukhari]

2. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) also said:

"Whoever commits a sin, and then performs wudhu, then offers prayers seeking forgiveness of God, God will certainly forgive him."

After this the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) recited the verse:

"...those who remember God and implore forgiveness for their sins if they do something shameful or wrong themselves – who forgives sins but God? – and who never knowingly persist in doing wrong." (Qur'an, 3:135)

May Allah make us of those who constantly return to Him for forgiveness as a means to achieve tranquility in our hearts, so that when we finally meet Him on the Day of Judgment, we are of those "who come to Allah with a sound heart.

"The Day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children, But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart." (Qur'an, 26:88-89)]

Courtesy: suhaibwebb

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-how abstracted ourselves from our wider humanity, from our true nature in relation to a higher reality.

At this juncture, I read a number of works on Islam, among them the books of Seyyed Hossein Nasr, who believed that many of the problems of western man, especially those of the environment, were from his having left the divine wisdom of revealed religion, which taught him his true place as a creature of God in the natural world and to understand and respect it. Without it, he burned up and consumed nature with ever more effective technological styles of commercial exploitation that ruined his world from without while leaving him increasingly empty within, because he did not know why he existed or to what end he should act.

I reflected that this might be true as far as it went, but it begged the question as to the truth of revealed religion. Everything on the face of the earth, all moral and religious systems, were on the same plane, unless one could gain certainty that one of them was from a higher source, the sole guarantee of the objectivity, the whole force, of moral law. Otherwise, one man's opinion was as good as another's, and we remained in an undifferentiated sea of conflicting individual interests, in which no valid objection could be raised to the strong eating the weak.

*To be concluded
islamreligion*

Killing for Religion?

Ali Unal

Our consciousness is manipulated and entrapped, to a certain extent, by slogans. Such conceptions as democracy; freedom, and human rights are the three most effective slogans used to benumb public opinion and maintain the world's order. As ideas, even as values, we do not necessarily object to them; rather, we do not approve of them when they are used by certain powers as cynical deceptions that are as corrosive as chemical weapons.

The world powers usually accept tyrannies for as long as they can manipulate them easily. They seek stability in those areas of a country's life that allow their economic interests to function and flourish unopposed. But yet they oppose any democratic country that jeopardizes their interests by seeking political or cultural independence. They interfere in such countries' internal affairs, on the grounds of "democracy and freedom," even though their own human rights' record is by no means good.

Leaving aside colonialism's past and present excesses in different guises, we note the continued existence of racial, cultural, and religious discrimination within their own lands. Concessions are made regularly to extremist political parties (ostensibly to prevent greater popularity); the number of crimes and prisoners continues to increase; and physical torture, especially of activists on behalf of minority interests, is unofficially toler-

ated. Yet they still claim the right to champion democracy, freedom, and human rights wherever they want to—just as long as it serves their own interests and they can justify the use of military or economic force to their own people.

They wage war thousands of miles away to assert their interests in an island, yet do not allow others the same right in an island on their very borders. Intelligence activities abroad are "heroic" when used by the world powers, but somehow become "barbaric" or "terrorist" when used by other countries seeking to maintain or assert their independence and self-defense. In short, the moral or philosophical value of democracy, freedom, and human rights is utterly compromised by the naked cynicism used to secure their dominion. Such practices remind us of the famous chant in Orwell's *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others."

Nothing is so effective against such cynicism as serious and sincere religious belief that can inspire the thoughts and actions that govern life. Therefore it is no surprise that political opinion-formers sometimes take swipes at religion on the absurd claim that religion inspires killing. *Time* magazine once, presented the Divinely inspired religion—whether Judaism, Christianity, or Islam—as a way of life that encourages "killing for God."

Some extremist groups misrepresent religion as a narrow political ideology and use it to display their hard-heartedness or rigidity, or to sublimate their inferiority or superiority complexes. However, a system that condemns such actions cannot itself be condemned whenever self-professed adherents use it to justify their reprehensible actions.

Religion is a contract between God and humanity, and all of its conditions favor and benefit us. As complex and civilized beings who, in addition to many other things, need a secure coexistence with other people, we seek peace and justice in our individual and collective lives. Just as individual motives differ, humanity's "collective reason" cannot comprehend the true nature of that necessary peace and justice or how to realize it in practice. The subsequent need for a transcendent intellect—religion—therefore was given to us by God. Religion is nothing more than an assemblage of the principles laid down by God for human happiness and security in both worlds and for the realization of justice in practical life.

Since people's essential nature and needs never change over the course of time, all Prophets preached the same fundamentals of religion. Any differences were confined to secondary matters related to the ever-changing circumstances of life. The religion chosen by God Almighty to ensure individual and collective human felicity in both worlds, and which He revealed through all Prophets is Islam.

Islam means belief in and submission to God, and thereby peace and justice in our individual and collective lives. *Judaism* and *Christianity* are names given to the earlier revelations of Islam under Prophets Moses and Jesus, respectively. No Israelite Prophet ever said *Judaism*. Jesus never claimed to establish *Christianity* on Earth or called him-

self a *Christian*. *Christian* appears only three times in the New Testament and first by pagans and Jews in Antioch about 43 AD, long after Jesus had left this Earth (Acts 11:26).

Islam can be best summed up in the *Bismillah*, the formula that is at the beginning of every Qur'anic chapter and uttered at the start of every good act: In the Name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate. The word translated as the All-Merciful is *al-Rahman*, which denotes God as the One Who, out of His infinite Mercy, protects and sustains, as well as guarantees the life of and provides for, *all members of creation without exception*. The word translated as the All-Compassionate is *al-Rahim*, which denotes God as the One Who has special mercy for His good, believing, devoted, and upright servants in both worlds. Moreover, the Qur'an states that the Prophet was *sent as a mercy for all worlds [all species of beings]* (21:107). A religion so based on mercy and compassion seeks to revive, not to kill.

Unfortunately, modern materialistic thought is fed by modern science's extreme positivism and rationalism. It therefore reduces life to the physical or material dimension and ignores the fact that peace, harmony, and contentment in this world depends upon human spirituality. A true spiritual life, one based on enlightening the mind or intellect through scientific knowledge and enlightening the heart and refining feelings through belief, religious knowledge, worship, and inspiration, is essential to the Prophets preaching. For example, the Qur'an proclaims:

Respond to God the Messenger, when the Messenger calls you to that which will give you life [which will revive you intellectually and spiritually] (8:24).

Muhammad Asad, a Jewish convert to Islam, likens Islam to a perfect work of architecture: All its parts are harmoniously

conceived to complement and support each other, nothing lacking, with the result of an absolute balance and solid composure. Therefore, it gives almost as much importance to our physical life as it does to our spiritual life. Islam regards each person as the representative of its kind and as having the same value as all humanity.

This is why God condemned Cain (Adam's son), for his unjust murder of his brother Abel introduced murder into history. As a result, he is held indirectly responsible for all killings until the end of time. As this sin is considered so grave, the Qur'an declares that one who kills someone unjustly is just like one who kills all of humanity, and that one who either revives someone either spiritually or physically is just like one who restores all of humanity to life either spiritually or physically (5:32).

Clearly, a religion that attaches such importance to the life of each person will never preach killing for its own sake or glorify it. Islam also does not approve of forced conversion, but rather seeks to remove whatever prevents us from making a free choice of what we will believe by establishing an environment in which freedom of belief and thought is secured. Once this is guaranteed, Islam asks us to use our God-given free will to choose and reminds us that we will be held responsible for it, as well as *for whatever* we did in this world, in the Hereafter:

There is no compulsion in religion, as right and guidance have been distinguished from wrong and deviation (2:256).

Prophet Muhammad (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was attacked many times by his enemies, and sometimes was forced to wage war on them. In all these wars only about 700 people were killed on both sides. As for modern civilization, we only want to mention some facts to clarify the point: Islam

has never had the least part in tens of millions of deaths in the communist revolutions, the suppression of freedom movements in several parts of the world at the cost of millions of lives, and in the adventures in several poor countries, costing more than millions of lives during the wars and many more indirectly since. It is not Islam which caused the death of more than 70 million people, mainly civilians, and forced countless millions more to remain homeless, widowed and orphaned, during and after the two world wars. It is not Islam which gave rise to totalitarian regimes such as Communism, Fascism, and Nazism, and raised war-mongers like Hitler, Stalin, and Mussolini. Islam is not responsible for using scientific knowledge to make nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction. Islam was not responsible for the extermination of tens of millions of natives in many parts of the world, for worldwide colonialism which lasted centuries, and for the slave trade, which costed the lives of tens of millions of people. It is not Islam, nor Muslim peoples even, that are responsible for the establishment of the despotic governments that rule over some Muslim countries and for their oppression, injustice, and bloody regimes. Nor is it Islam which is responsible for modern terrorism, mafia organizations, and for the world-wide smuggling of weapons and drugs.

Did religion or modern civilization, extolled as the most advanced and humane in history, cause the death of more than 60 million people, the majority of them civilians, and force countless millions more to remain homeless, widowed and orphaned, during and after the two World Wars? Is religion responsible for using scientific knowledge to make nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction with which to intimidate poor and weak nations?

If the world powers that want to impose their world order in the name of “world peace, democracy, and human freedom,” but in reality for their own political and economic advantage, give themselves the right to commit such atrocities, surely people claiming to serve God can use the same rationale to debar the world of such atrocities and establish true peace and realize true freedom. But believers do not justify, like modern political cynicism does, such atrocities and war-mongering in the name of merely political ends. Believers, unlike unbelievers, realize that those actions sincerely undertaken only in the Name of God, the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate, and that have no other motive and do not transgress God’s limits, can revive truly humane values.

Ali ibn Abi Talib (RA) presents such an example. During a battle, this noble Companion and future caliph, felled his enemy and was on the point of killing him. But at that very moment, the man spat in Ali’s face. To his surprise, Ali (RA) released him immediately. Later on he explained his action: The man’s action had made him suddenly angry and, therefore, fearing that he would kill the man because of a selfish motive, he released him. This enemy soldier embraced Islam and thus was revived both spiritually and physically.

Red Milk

Ask our children:

1. *Who are our friends?*
2. *Why did we choose them to be our friends?*
3. *If our parents are not happy with our friends, what should we do?*

Now tell them the story:

There was a playful little calf that always played with his friends; the tall giraffe, the short buffalo and the fat elephant. Because of his friends, his ways and manners began to change. He was no longer that warm and loving son he used to be. The mother cow became very worried, so she told him one day, “O my dear son! Your friends are not your real friends. They are just there because every day you share with them the fresh and tasty milk shake I make for you. You should rather make the little red sparrow your friend. He will help you when you need him.”

The little calf laughed and said, “O my mother! The red sparrow is so weak and useless. My friend the giraffe has the most powerful kick, my friend the buffalo has the sharpest horns and my friend the elephant has the longest trunk. They are so strong and they will protect me and look after me when I am in trouble.” The mother cow realized that her son failed to understand her. So with a crying heart she silently made du‘aa, “O Allah, You have mercy and guide my son.”

It so happened that one day while the calf was playing with his three friends they suddenly heard the loud roar of the hungry lion. The giraffe with its long legs was the first to run away. Thereafter the buffalo and the elephant quietly moved away and joined the rest of the buffaloes and elephants and were quite safe. The little calf was left all alone. Due to sudden shock and extreme fear, his feet completely froze, which prevented him from escaping. He thought to himself, “If only I had listened to my mother. She was right. My friends were not real friends.”

In the meantime, the little red sparrow who was sitting all alone on a tree above, had seen all that had happened. He quickly rushed forward carrying a huge red flower between his feet. He asked the little calf to quickly pour some milk into the huge red flower. The moment the white milk filled inside the huge red flower, it turned red as blood. The little red sparrow then flew over in the direction of the hungry lion and bravely started to peck between the eyes of the lion. The lion roared in anger, but the sparrow continued in his rescue mission until finally he let go of the huge red flower. The reddened milk splashed on the lions face and it began to drip all the way to the ground below. When the lion saw that he was bleeding to death, he became extremely terrified and immediately forgot about the little calf and fled away. The little calf was saved. He rushed towards the little sparrow and with extreme joy shouted out, “As of today you will never be alone again. We are going to be the best of friends.”

What is Your Greatest Blessing?

J. Yousef

The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) said:

“Allah subhanahu wa ta`ala [exalted is He] is Jawād and He loves those who are magnanimous in giving. He loves excellent moral character and detests meanness.” (Bayhaqi)

Today I am going to be talking about two of Allah’s Names that focus on different aspects of His Generosity. The first is His Name al-Jawād and the second is His Name al-Mannān.

Al-Jawād comes from the root j-w-d ج و د and it means something plentiful or magnanimous. Jawād is the name given to a strong and fast horse, and jawd is heavy, pouring rainfall. The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) taught us that, “Allah’s Hands are full, and that fullness is not diminished by His giving day and night) ”... Muslim)

Just like a heavy rain that falls and nourishes everything, Allah’s giving is like that and more. Blessings rain on us every single day and we do not even notice. Al-Jawād is the One who is magnanimous in spirit and magnanimous in giving.

Something happened to me a few years back, when I visited Boston, which highlighted to me how Allah manifests His Names in our lives. I was taking the underground, called the “T”, with a friend. The way the system operates is that you need a card to touch in, but you do not need it to leave, so

you only pay a flat rate upon entry. My friend touched in, and as I tried to, it turned out that my card did not have enough money in it. As I turned around to top-up my card, out of nowhere, a stranger came and used her card to let me in. I was startled, and she gave me a big smile and left.

The funny thing is that, in that period in my life, I was not in the best spiritual state. So I could not view it as a reward or appreciation for any good I may have done; that is Allah al-Jawād, who rains His blessings down even on sinners. He is Magnanimous in spirit and Magnanimous in His giving. We all breathe in air out of His magnanimity, whether we are good or bad people. Allah gives freely, as we are told in the Qur’an:

“Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills.” (Qur’an, 5:64)

The Greatest Blessing

One of the Companions of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) once called to Allah (swt), saying:

“O Allah, I ask you as all praise is Yours.

There is no god except You, You are al-Mannān [the Bestower], the Originator of the Heavens and Earth, Possessor of Majesty and Honor. O the Ever-Living, O Self-Subsisting.” The Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) heard him and said:

“He has supplicated to Allah using His Greatest Name; when supplicated with this Name, He answers, and when asked with this Name, He gives.” (Abu Dawud)

Recently, I bought something really beautiful. I was not sure if I was going to buy it, but somehow, I got it just before `Eid. Whenever I see it, I smile because I feel like it was an `Eid gift from Allah (swt).

It is always nice to look at the things that you have—from something as small as a bag, to the family and friends you have—and know that their ultimate source is Allah (swt), and be grateful to Him for His gifts.

Previously in this series, we have talked about Allah the Giver of Gifts and the Provider. This Name shows us a different form of His giving: it is Allah al-Mannan. I will translate it for ease as the Bestower, but insha`Allah (God willing) we will delve deeper into its meaning here.

The word mann مَنَّ comes from the root m-n-n مَنَن and is an intense form of the word, which means to cut something and leave with it. Allah (swt) says in the Qur`an:

“And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted.” (68:3)

The word mamnoon has been translated as uninterrupted, meaning a reward that is not ‘cut off.’ Al-Mannān is an intensified form of the root and means to give freely or liberally.

At the surface, this Name may not seem any different from His Name the Most Generous (al-Kareem), who gives much more than expected or deserved. What is interesting though is how Allah (swt) uses the verb form of the word in the Qur`an:

“Certainly did Allah confer great favor [manna] upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in mani-

fest error.” (3:164)

Allah (swt) reminds us of the status of the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) by using the word “mann”. When we look at the world around us, we realize that in terms of material things, Allah (swt) has given things to different categories of people. Some of the most corrupt people are extremely wealthy, and so are some generous philanthropists. Material wealth, which we understand as ultimately from God, does not reflect one’s spiritual standing with Him.

When Allah (swt) refers to His favors in the form of mann, an intense giving, He talks about those favors related to the Hereafter. He tells us that he has favored us by giving us a messenger who is from us, who purifies us and teaches us (3:164). In another verse, Allah (swt) says:

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

It is easier to remember to be grateful for material and emotional blessings because we reap the benefits in the present. But Allah (swt) reminds us of everything He gives us, and particularly the gifts related to our connection with Him in this life that lead to being with Him in the Hereafter. It is a blessing we sometimes take for granted. The ability to turn to Him, to seek wisdom and comfort from the Qur`an, and to learn from the example of the Prophet (S); these are all great gifts from al-Mannān.

Allah (swt) also tells us in the Qur`an about people on the Day of Judgment:

“They will say, “Indeed, we were previously among our people fearful [of displeasing Allah]. So Allah conferred favor (fa manna) upon us and protected us from the punishment of the Scorching Fire.” (52:26-27)

The greatest mann from Allah (swt)

is ultimately Paradise. For the very little that we do, we are given something that no language has the words to describe. May Allah (swt) make us all of the people of Paradise.

Connecting to al-Jawād and al-Mannān

1- Be Magnanimous.

It was said about the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) that “when it came to doing good, he was the most magnanimous (ajwad) of people, and he was at his utmost magnanimity during the month of Ramadan,)” (Bukhari). Be magnanimous in spirit, and be magnanimous in giving. Nothing you give is ever lost.

2- Reflect

Reflect on the material gifts and emotional gifts, but also reflect on and be grateful for the spiritual gifts.

The greatest gifts we have been given are the spiritual gifts. Wealth may or may not be accompanied by peace of mind in this world, and ultimately, we will be asked about what we spent our wealth on. But the gifts of closeness to Allah (swt) are truly the ones to be cherished. Reflecting on these blessings is one of the ways to increase our love for Allah (swt).

3- Ponder the gift of the Prophet.

Allah reminds us that one of His gifts to us is the Prophet (S). Learn from the Prophet’s (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) character and study his seerah (biography) to understand why Allah (swt) told us that the Prophet (Sallallahu Alaihi Wasallam) was given to us as a favor from the Most High.

4. Selflessness

Do not be a person that constantly reminds people of the favors that you have done for them.

There are two types of mann: in action and in speech. Mann, as an action from Allah (swt), has a sweetness to it because its Giver is the One who gives freely and is the most generous. Moreover, His reminders cause us to return to Him, and returning to Him results in more blessings. This mann as an action is specific to Allah (swt) because of the perfection of His gifts. Then there is the mann of speech, when people remind you of their favors upon you. Allah (swt) tells us, “Do not invalidate your charities with reminders (mann) or injury,)” (Qur’an, 2:264). When you give, remember that your intention is for Allah (swt), and do not remind people of the things you have done for them.

Courage and Firmness

On one occasion, Hazrat Moulana Masehullah Khan Saahab (ra) fell extremely ill. He could barely walk firmly. From his house to the majlis-kehana, he had to stop twice to rest. After sitting down he explained to those who were present, “I am gone extremely weak, so weak that I can barely walk to the majlis-kehana. I stopped twice to rest. With great difficulty I managed to perform my zuhr salaah. I’ve got numbness in my feet. The only reason I am telling you all of this is so that you may understand that for small petty reasons you should not leave out your work. One must remain firm upon the work one is appointed to do.”

(Hazrat Moulana Masehullah Khan Saahab [ra] – A Brief Biography)

The Oaths that Allah Takes and the Importance of Consulting

An oath is generally taken to impress upon the listener that what I am saying is the truth. But when Allah takes an oath then there is no need for Him to impress, for there can be nobody more truthful than Allah. Further, everything is subject to Him. There isn't anything that is above Him. When we speak we need to impress on people about our might, glory and power. But Allah does not need that. When He speaks, He speaks to us at our level out of compassion for us in order that we understand. It is like a father who has a young child in pre-primary school; if he wishes to explain to him a concept he will come down to his level and explain it. Hence, at times Allah will impress by taking an oath and at times He will impress by witnessing Himself. When taking oaths we are commanded not to take an oath in the name of any creation because it is as though we will be saying to the next person that if you do not believe me then this is the person that I call as witness to the truth of what I am saying and this is the person that I hold in utmost respect. Therefore, we are asked to only take an oath in the name of Allah because the creation is too insignificant.

Many a times when we take an oath we show such significance and importance to the thing in which the oath is taken that it can lead to divinity. So anything that can lead to shirk and polytheism has been blocked and sealed off. For example, idolatry in itself is disbelief, but anything that will lead to idolatry is also regarded as haraam. Therefore, to respect an idol, to carve and make one, and to transport it is haraam. To keep an image even for remembrance is also haraam. Although one may not have the belief of divinity, but since it leads to idolatry it has been regarded as impermissible and haraam. Therefore, to prostrate before a grave is impermissible. To keep an image of an animate object is also haraam, as this is how idol worship had commenced. Initially, when a pious person passed away, the people thought that it will be a good idea to keep a picture and image of this pious person in the place where they would do their acts of worship. Then in the coming generations the people felt that these images need to be worshipped as well and that was how idol worship commenced. Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) is kabaatamun-nabiyyeen and there is no nabi to come after him. So every avenue towards idol worship needed to be sealed off. Therefore, Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) has prohibited the taking of and the drawing of images of animate objects. One is where one is forced due to legal requirements, like for an I.D. or passport etc. That is a different case. Allah will forgive a person insha-Allah. We will not say that it is entirely permissible but since we are forced and we do not wish for it, Allah will forgive us. Therefore, if we need to take the photo we will do so with a feeling of guilt and with istighfaar, showing that I do not identify with these people; I identify with Nabi (sallallahu 'alaihi wasallam) as he has said that it is not right. If we are not going to do it with a remorseful heart then we will see how smart we are in the photo, what type of a topee I am wearing, etc.