

THE ISLAMIC INTELLECTUAL FRAMEWORK

Abbas Al Hamid

A Foundational Curriculum for the Islamic Religion



Download
Teacher Guide

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The Islamic Intellectual Framework

A Foundational Curriculum
for the Islamic Religion

The book contains **30** educational videos.

Abbas Al Hamid

Foreword by: Dr. Salim Al-Busaidi

Dedication

To the one who nurtured in me the love of God...

Who guided me to His path...

*Who embodied for me the meanings of trust, sincerity,
and sacrifice for His sake...*

Who taught me the love of life and its meaning...

*To the noble teacher whose lessons I have not yet fully
comprehended...*

*To the role model whose depth of faith, certainty,
serenity, and connection with God I aspire to attain...*

To the soul of my mother, Khadijah...

Please accept this humble offering!





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Foreword

By Dr. Salim Al-Busaidi

Borges once said, "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library."

Yes, that is what he said.

Yet I still often wonder: how does that blind poet imagine a library?

Here, with this book, The Islamic Intellectual System, you do not merely imagine Paradise.

You touch it. You live its depth. You sense its beauty. You hear the melodies of its music.

This book is a paradise that leads you to Paradise.

A paradise as you read and wander through its streets and alleyways;

As you taste the nectar of its ideas and

embrace the loftiness of its meanings.

You experience an intellectual paradise arranged within an interconnected system, each circle leading to another, until they come together and you find Paradise before you.

And alongside the paradise of thought, you experience the paradise of reassurance; the paradise of tranquility; the paradise of the soul.

No... no, this is not something attained through theory, but through experience.

Dear readers,

One joyful evening, I was on the enchanting shore of Muttrah.

I was watching flocks of seagulls wandering through the spellbinding beauty of that ancient city.

The sun was about to set.

I hurried toward my car.

Then I saw Maktabat Al-Thaqalayn.

It was open, so I entered.

I was in a hurry, and I knew the bookstore would soon close for prayer.

There I saw it.

On the table.

Its title caught my attention: The Islamic Intellectual System.

I wondered: what could be new here?

Then I saw the author's name: Abbas Al-Hamid.

It never crossed my mind that these two names—the title of the book and the name of its author—would leave such a deep impression on me.

From that day on, I became devoted to roaming through the book and the thought of its author.

Dear readers,

There is another feature that distinguishes this book—or, if you prefer, a defining quality. It is the author himself.

A man who comes riding on the steed of Western study, blended with a lofty Islamic consciousness.

This strategic expert—whose writings and institutions testify to his stature—has come to offer a profound intellectual and strategic vision.

He has come to gift you the nectar of his experiences and the harvest of his thoughts.

He is a mature caller to God, an active initiator, and a conscious planner.

If you draw near to him, you will draw from his character before his knowledge.

And if you deal with him, you will find the intellectual system embodied before you as a living human being.

Blessed are we to have such a stature among us—one who combines thought and spirit, awareness and action.

Dear readers,

There are books that astonish your mind, yet leave you afterward with a deep spiritual dryness.

And there are books that touch your soul, yet leave you afterward with a painful intellectual emptiness.

But nothing delights the self like a book that nourishes both the mind and the soul together. This, in truth, is the first distinguishing feature of this book.

The second feature is its entry into depth and higher purposes.

Yes, the higher purposes that should be the essence to which we give our care—not the deceptive outward appearance.

The third feature is that it is a book of Islamic unity: there is no rigidity and no fanaticism.

As for the profound Qur’anic presence, that is a feature surpassing all that has been mentioned.

Add to that the creativity of its presentation, the precision of its organization, and the beauty of its division.

Then there is the presence of image and color. Nor should we conclude without mentioning

the assessment questions centered around the Qur’anic verses.

This book is truly astonishing in its content, presentation, and language.

Dear readers,

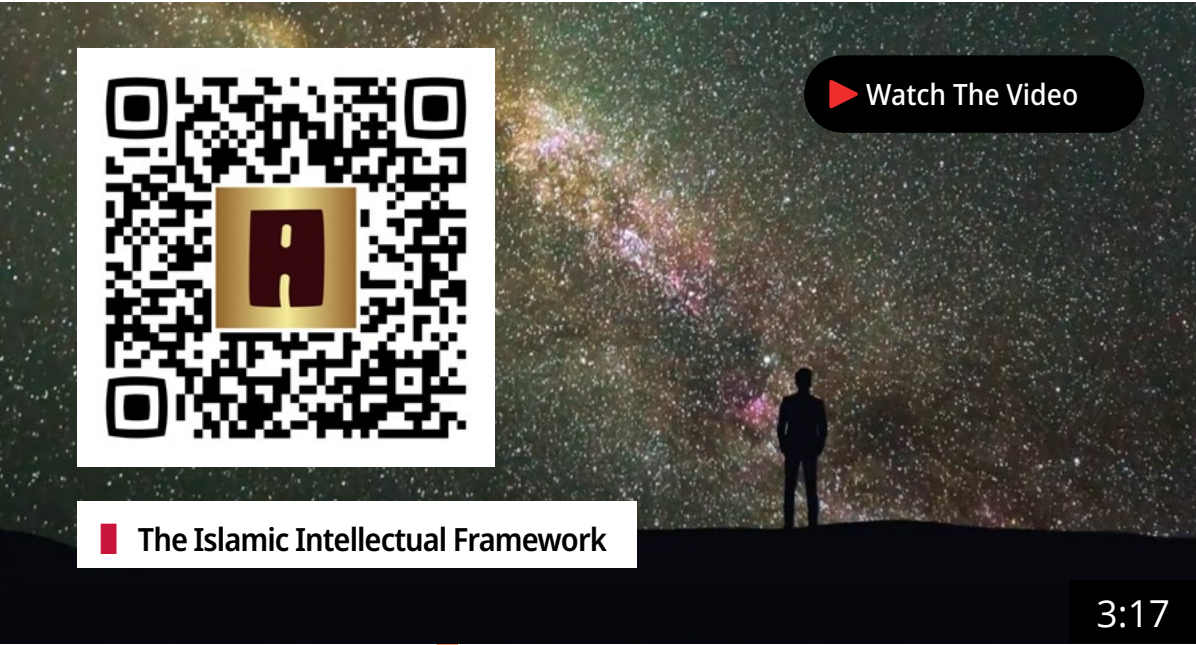
Were I to offer advice to a parent who wishes to present his children, in this difficult age, with a sound and well-grounded Islamic thought; in an age of intellectual conflicts, technological octopuses, and media networks; were I to offer advice to someone who wishes to fortify his children with conscious thought, a refined spirit, and noble values, I would not hesitate to recommend this book.

Beyond that, the book itself has been written to serve this very purpose, through its structure, questions, and themes.

It truly deserves a place in the library of every home.

I shall not keep you standing long at the threshold. Paradise lies before you, so gather from its abundance whatever you wish.

Dr. Salim bin Saeed Al-Busaidi





عباس آل حميد
WWW.ALHUMAID.ORG

المنظومة الفكرية الإسلامية

منهج تدريس ديني تأسيسي

Muslim Scholars' Testimonials for the First Edition



Sheikh Khalid Al-Mala, Head of the Iraqi Scholars Group:

"A high quality, distinguished work. What particularly sets it apart is that it considers the Islamic dimension and the divine curriculum that Allah was seeking to establish by sending the Great Prophet Muhammad (PBUHF). The theses presented in this book—which are of great importance in this time and place—offer a rare chance for people to perceive and understand this curriculum."



Sayyid Munir Al-Khabbaz

"I read the book of my dear brother, the distinguished scholar and respected Sheikh Abbas, and found it to be a remarkable work. Through it, he highlighted the essential unity between Shiism and Islam, and demonstrated the firmness of its foundations and pillars, as well as the greatness of its principles and values. He poured into it exquisite thought and an abundant, radiant share of the Muhammadan, Alawite, Fatimid, Hasanid, and Husaynid heritage. Thus, the book shone as an aura of Qur'anic light and was strung together like a beautiful necklace of Prophetic guidance. This is no surprise from him, for he possesses a captivating pen, generous contribution, and luminous thought. May God bless his efforts, and may his reward be with God."



Dr. Muhammad Salim Al-Awa

"I have reviewed the book and was pleased by the accuracy and conciseness of its information."



Sheikh Haidar Huballah

"The scholar Abbas Al-Humaid attempts to provide a focused vision for a well-developed awareness of the religion among future generations. It connects them with the components of the religious system, allowing them to form a vocabulary to talk about religious issues in an interconnected way in the context of the various layers of Islam. This, it is widely believed, is what is sorely needed to enable believers to understand religion as an integrated entity, without dividing it into its component parts and separating them from the context of the Islamic system. I hope that this book will help create an awareness of religion that places it in its systemic context, while at the same time raising our level of thinking in dealing with religious issues, in an age when humanity needs faith and morals more than ever before."



Sheikh Badr bin Salem bin Hamdan Al-Abri:

"I read the book and found it to be a call to unite the Islamic nation and to develop mankind. This is what we desire in this current age. The book is thorough and orderly. The author provided us with structuralized content that presents Islam in a modern manner to adolescents. The reader of this book gets to explore two topics well: humanity and civilization, but through a perspective that puts mankind in a role that allows it to build a just and prosperous society, anchored in a positive reaction to a belief in Allah, Exalted be He, and in the fact that mankind holds authority on Earth on His behalf. I agree with most of the book and while I disagree with a few parts, this disagreement in opinion does not reduce the affection between the author and I."



Sheikh Hassan Moussa Al-Safar:

"I read Abbas Al-Humaid's "The Islamic Intellectual Framework" closely and with deep reflection and found it more than adequate for the purpose for which it was developed: as a method of foundational religious teaching. Indeed, it represents a wonderful response to the need of the religious arena for the existence of curricula that advance religious thought as a coherent and integrated system, in clear academic language and an attractive contemporary style. Among the advantages of this worthy approach are its presentation of visions and ideas inspired by the verses of the Holy Quran—aimed at strengthening the Quranic culture and attesting to its origins—and citations of the hadiths and narrations of the Messenger of Allah (PBUHF), the imams, and the words of scholars and thinkers. The evaluation questions at the end of each topic have been carefully chosen to help students understand the ideas and develop their capacity for analysis and discussion."



Habib Salim Al-Mashhur

"This book fills a major gap in the educational field. We are in urgent need of a language of dialogue that allows young people to liberate their thinking from rigidity and blind imitation, and to enter the realm of faith, where serenity descends upon the soul and tranquility settles in the heart. This book combines emotional and intellectual education, and in doing so, God willing, forms an integrated methodology suitable for the new generation living through a great knowledge revolution. May God bless the efforts of its author, grant him reward and recompense, and make this work beneficial to Islam, Muslims, and humanity. This work is a model worthy of emulation. God is the Grantor of success, and from Him we seek help and guidance."



Sheikh Ali Al-Dahnin

"It is distinguished by a number of benefits, each of which is testament to the good sense of the author. These include the academic style that draws the reader into each topic; the simple and flowing language used throughout the book. The gradual progression of the argumentation as one idea segues into the next. The reinforcement of each idea with examples of the reality of life experienced by the young reader; the many citations of Quranic verses and narrations; and, finally, the provision of summaries that help the reader to confirm and consolidate the points in their mind and recall them easily as needed. This makes it easier for the recipient to pick up on the basic idea being explained by the writer."



Sheikh Abd Al-Karim Al-Haeri:

"I found it systematically structured, almost contract-like in the arrangements of its ideas. It shed light on various issues through the verses and narrations it cited and the argumentation it derived from them. He added to this book what the modern age requires, by using the sayings of great philosophers, intellectuals and religious figures. This adds even more strength to the proofs being presented in this book, in accordance to the concepts accepted in the modern age. His method was perfectly contemporary."



Sheikh Shafiq Jaradi, Director of the Institute of Al Maarif Al Hekamiiah (for religious and philosophical studies):

"A successful venture. The wording is elegant, the goal of the curriculum is clear and worthy, and the style is highly compatible with its specific goal. I ask God to facilitate this curriculum so that this generation of Muslims may develop awareness of their identity and their position in civilization."

Before You Start Reading

An Introduction

This book has been carefully crafted to serve as a source of inspiration and enrichment for anyone seeking to explore the Islamic intellectual system. Bridging theoretical knowledge with practical application, it caters to both independent learners and those seeking a structured curriculum. Moreover, its rich and multidimensional content enriches foundational religious studies, offering a truly fulfilling learning experience.

This curriculum is suitable for students in the foundation stages of their religious education,



including the secondary (pre-university) and university levels. It aims to help students establish themselves as faithful, committed, and conscientious individuals with a religious culture and a vision of life based on and derived from the Qur'an.

The approach seeks to present the Islamic intellectual framework in a coherent and integrated fashion, using discussion and analysis, and in a contemporary style and language that are consistent with what we find in our current cultural world. The purpose of this is to enable the student to filter the concepts and culture of globalization, which



they experience through the various channels of communication and knowledge in our contemporary cultural environments — through the Quranic and Islamic perspective. In the future, it will enable them to ground their religious knowledge in the style and language of the times.

This approach is designed to avoid the issue of sectarian specificities. As such, it does not deal with topics related to jurisprudence, Islamic history, or the Prophetic biography. It also does

not address a number of intellectual topics within Islam, since this is outside the framework of its objectives.

The curriculum is designed to be taught as a stand-alone course or within the general religious teaching curriculum adopted by the various bodies responsible for religious teaching in different regions.



Knowledge-Related Goals

- To enable the student to understand the Islamic intellectual framework as an integrated system with various interrelated parts, in a style and language consistent with the prevailing language of global culture. This will enable the student to recognize the distinctiveness of the Islamic intellectual framework from the other schools of thought.
- To root the student in Quranic culture so that the form of their culture is based on Quranic reasoning.
- To develop the student's ability to analyze and discuss such that they are able to confront the various deviating paths of intellectual thought and call for the more favorable path of Allah.

Conduct-Related Goals

- To connect the student with God at the level of their routine activities and daily life, to put them on the path towards God, and allow them to form the concepts and mental notions necessary to benefit from the daily practice of walking towards God.
- To create self-motivation in the student for positive conduct, reform, goodness and invoking God's name, and for enjoining good and forbidding evil as God ordered.

Contents of the Curriculum

The curriculum contains 33 interrelated units designed to give students an effective and coherent idea of the Islamic intellectual framework as a whole. These lessons are categorized into the three major parts of the Islamic intellectual framework: the Islamic vision of life, the Islamic faith, and Islamic practices.



Part One

The Islamic Vision

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1

Summary of the Islamic Intellectual Framework

"This worldly life is no more than play and amusement, but far better is the 'eternal' Home of the Hereafter for those mindful 'of Allah'. Will you not then understand?" (Quran, 6:32)



[↑ Table of contents](#)



▶ Watch The Video

■ Summary of the Islamic Intellectual Framework

6:18

The Story of Life

Our existence is summarized in the saying of Allah: “Indeed, we belong to Allah and to Him we shall return.” It is a journey with a beginning, a mission, a path, and a destination.

Step 1: Creation for a Purpose

We were created for a noble purpose.

Allah created us out of His generosity and made the universe in constant motion toward Him, aiming for completion and closeness to Him, not in vain.



Step 2: Stewardship and Responsibility

Humans are Allah's stewards on Earth.

He granted us will and awareness and entrusted us with the great responsibility that the heavens and the earth could not bear.



Step 3: Striving and Choice

Our life is a striving toward Allah.

Through our will and actions in this world, we determine our own path—either closer to Allah or farther from Him.



Step 4: Guidance and Support

He did not leave us alone on the journey.

Out of His mercy, Allah sent messengers and books and subjected the universe to help us achieve our goal.



Step 5: Nearness is the Goal

Our ultimate goal is closeness to Allah.

Our happiness in this world and the Hereafter is a direct result and reflection of how close we are to Allah, the Exalted.





Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? Can we control our lives and destiny, and if so, how? These are the oldest and most intriguing questions. They are fundamental inquiries, which captivate us as humans, and they are precisely what the Islamic intellectual framework addresses.

In the beginning, the Islamic vision of life emerged from a saying of Allah Almighty: [﴿Indeed we belong to Allah, and to Him do we indeed return﴾](#) (Quran, 2:156).

It is because God (Allah) Almighty is the essence of pure generosity — and because the existence of living beings necessitates their happiness — that Allah created them with myriad qualities and capabilities, in accordance with the law of causality. [﴿Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure﴾](#). (Quran, 54:49).

The Almighty did not create these multifarious living beings only to see them languish in stagnation. He created a universe that is constantly in motion and filled it with beings that are constantly striving to improve their existence — a transformation that is billions of times more

magnificent than what we observe when silkworms turn into butterflies. ﴿Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?﴾. (Quran, 23:115).

Keep in mind that spiritual evolution is a continuum, which progresses through the various stages of life, starting in this world and culminating in the afterlife, in accordance with cosmic laws that are never broken. This is the journey towards Allah. ﴿Then do they await except the way of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration﴾. (Quran, 35:43).

The greatest of all living things in existence is the human being, the most magnificent being in the universe, whom Allah has made his ambassador. Allah gave humans certain unique tools that set us apart from the rest of creation—qualities such as free will, reason, compassion, and wisdom. These and many other attributes elevate humanity to a special position in His creation, and remember that these attributes were not even given to the

angels. God Almighty said to the angels: ﴿And when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration﴾. (Quran, 15:29).

As one of Allah's creations becomes greater and stronger, their subservience to Him becomes more impactful and they hold more and more responsibilities. That is why mankind holds a responsibility that is beyond that which can be held by all other beings. ﴿Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they ʿallʿ declined to bear it, being fearful of it. But humanity assumed it, ʿforʿ they are truly wrongful ʿto themselvesʿ and ignorant ʿof the consequencesʿ﴾. (Quran, 33:72).

However, Allah, Exalted be He, would not have granted humanity this important trust, which the heavens and the earth declined to bear, and then abandoned it without Him, Exalted be He, providing any support and compassion in order to allow humanity to achieve its purpose. “Do people think they will be left without purpose?” (Quran, 75:36)



God made all the angels and all living beings subservient to humans so that we may move closer to God: “And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all from Him. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought.” (Quran, 45:13)

Our proximity to the Almighty is a melding of our perfection (for we are his perfect beings) with our evolved essence (which we constantly strive to improve) and our full cognizance of our absolute servitude to Allah Almighty and of His love, because Allah is absolute, infinite perfection. Indeed, the Almighty is not only perfection but also existence itself, “And the forerunners, the forerunners (10) Those are the ones brought near [to Allah].” (Quran, 65:10-11)

The entire universe has been created to help humanity grow closer to the Almighty. However, every human, through his own will, using his wisdom and other attributes, and through his efforts and actions in this world, is solely responsible for controlling his journey towards

God. He alone determines whether he will move closer to Almighty Allah, or whether he will distance himself: “So as for he who transgressed (37) And preferred the life of the world, (38) Then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge (39) But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, (40) Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge.” (Quran, 79:37-41)

Our sense of happiness or misery, and how we are judged in the afterlife are the exact mirror of our relationship with the Almighty: of how close we are to Him, in accordance with the cosmic laws and rules that Allah created: “That Day, the people will depart separated [into categories] to be shown [the result of] their deeds. (6) So, whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, (7) And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.” (Quran, 99:6-8)

Since human misery is the terrible and unavoidable consequence of being distant from God, Allah, in his mercy and wisdom saw fit to offer His help to humanity at large. He, in his kindness, sent messengers, Imams and

guides with holy books and doctrines to guide humans towards Him (of which the last messenger, holy book and doctrine were Muhammad (PBUHF), the Quran, and Islam respectively). *"It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom—although they were before in clear error."* (Quran, 62:2)

Humans are social beings. We cannot survive in isolation, from either the universe or each other, because we are woven into the fabric of creation. We interact with our surroundings, influencing the spaces that we inhabit and all the other lives that we touch with our own. Only through great effort do we evolve, and only through meeting the challenges of life's many battles head-on are our powers refined and amplified. Furthermore, when we show our love for all creatures, and in particular for our fellow humans by offering help and showing compassion, we embody one of the truly noble qualities that bring us closer to Allah.

Since love lies at the very heart of it, Islam naturally considers it the responsibility of all people to liberate humanity from corruption and injustice in all their forms. We must strive to improve ourselves every day, towards the ultimate goal of perfection. It is our shared responsibility to be integral to, and directly responsible for the completely Muslim nation, including every Muslim in it. *"By time, (1) Indeed, mankind is in loss, (2) Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience."* (Quran, 103:1-3)

However, the distractions of our daily lives, the challenges people face on a day-to-day basis and the desires that captivate us often distract us from meeting this responsibility. *"Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you (1) Until you visit the graveyards."* (Quran, 102:1-2)

With this in mind, not only did He establish the Islamic system of faith, full of encouraging words, and not only did He establish an all-

encompassing form of divine kindness to guide His believers. He also legislated an elaborate system of practices that, by their nature automatically instill in every human a sense of responsibility towards himself and to the universe. He is inculcated with this sense, which it permeates his being to the very core. This results in a vision of life and the universe that is as positive as it is constructive. This system gifted to us by God includes the

systematic practice of worship, the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice, affection for the Prophet and his family (PBUT), and other devotional rituals. "To Him ascends the good word, that elevates righteous conduct." (Quran 35:10) And the Almighty said: "Recite, [O Muhammad], what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing," (Quran 29:45)

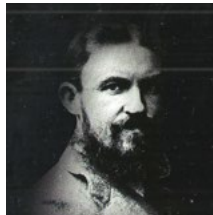




Optional Reading

What Do Eminent Non-Muslims Say About Islam?

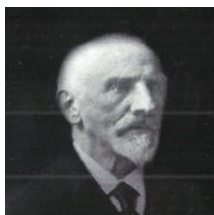
Sir George Bernard Shaw, an Irish playwright and a co-founder of the London School of Economics. He is the only person to have been awarded both an Oscar and a Nobel Prize for Literature; *The Genuine Islam*:



"I have always held the religion of Muhammad in high estimation because of its wonderful vitality. It is the only religion that appears to possess the assimilating capacity to the changing phase of existence can make itself appeal to every age. I have studied him the wonderful man and, in my opinion, far from being an antichrist, he must be called the Savior of Humanity."



**Christiaan Snouck
Hurgronje (Dutch
scholar), Where Christian
and Mohammedan Meet**



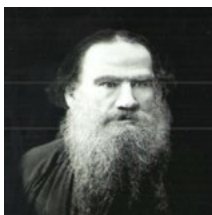
"The league of nations founded by the prophet of Islam put the principle of international unity and human brotherhood on such universal foundations as to show candle to other nations... The fact is that no nation of the world can show a parallel to what Islam has done towards the realization of the idea of the League of Nations. The world has not hesitated to raise to divinity, individuals whose lives and missions have been lost in legend. Historically speaking, none of these legends achieved even a fraction of what Muhammad accomplished. In addition, all his striving was for the sole purpose of uniting humankind for the worship of One God on the codes of moral excellence. Muhammad or his followers never at any time claimed that he was a Son of God or the God – incarnate or a man with divinity – but he always was and is even today considered as only a Messenger chosen by God".

**Dr. Arthur Bertherand
(French medical scientist
and author), Arab
Contribution to Progress
of Medical Science**



" To seek knowledge is a duty of every Muslim man and woman."... "Seek knowledge even though it be in China."... "The savants are the heirs of the Prophets."... These profound words of the great reformer are an indisputable contradiction to those who seek and exert themselves in putting the responsibility of the intellectual degradation of Muslims upon the spirit of the Quran. Let them read and meditate upon this great Book and they will read that the Prophet incessantly called the attention and the meditation of his people to the splendid marvels, to the mysterious phenomenon of creation. The incredulous, skeptical and unbelieving may convince themselves that the importance of this Book and its doctrine was not to throw back, eventually, the intellectual and moral faculties of a whole people. On the contrary, those who have followed its counsels have been, as we have described in the course of this study, the creators of a civilization which is astounding unto this day"

Leo Tolstoy, Selected Sayings of the Prophet:



"I am one of those who are very much impressed by the Prophet Muhammad who was chosen by the One God to have His last message revealed through his soul, heart and mind. He chose him to be the last prophet; hence, no other prophets would come after him. His acknowledgement of the prophets, who had been sent by God before him to produce the global social building for which Muhammad had been sent to complete, is indubitable evidence that he came with Islam to conclude the social building for the entire humanity everywhere." "There has been no prophet who gained the respect of his enemies save the prophet Muhammad. This is why a lot of them embraced Islam later on. It seems surprising that those who declared themselves enemies of him certainly knew that he was trustworthy and was calling them to the truth; They even respected him in the depth of their hearts, but they concealed this respect for they did not want to be accused of leaving their faiths.

Edward Montet (French historian), Christian Propaganda Against Muslims:



"Islam is a religion that is essentially rationalistic in the widest sense of this term considered etymologically and historically... the teachings of the Prophet, the Qur'an has invariably kept its place as the fundamental starting point, and the dogma of unity of God has always been proclaimed therein with a grandeur and majesty, an invariable purity and with a note of sure conviction, which it is hard to find surpassed outside the pale of Islam.... A creed so precise, so stripped of all theological complexities and consequently so accessible to the ordinary understanding might be expected to possess and does indeed possess a marvelous power of winning its way into the consciences of men".

**Swami Vivekananda
(Indian thinker and
philosopher), Complete
Works of Swami
Vivekananda:**



"The Hindus may get the credit of arriving at it earlier than other races, they being an older race than either the Hebrew or the Arab; Yet practical Advaitism, which looks upon and behaves to all humankind as one's own soul, was never developed among the Hindus. Universally. On the other hand, my experience is that if ever any religion approached to this equality in an appreciable manner, it is Islam and Islam alone. Therefore, I am firmly persuaded that without the help of practical Islam, theories of Vedantism, however fine and wonderful they may be, are entirely valueless to the vast mass of mankind."

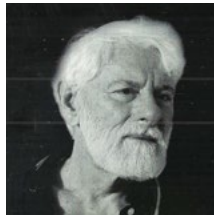
"(Islam) came as a message for the masses. The first message was equality. There is one religion love. No more, question of race, color, (or) anything else. Join it! That practical quality carried the day. The great message was perfectly simple. Believe in one God, the creator of heaven and earth. God created all out of nothing. Ask no questions."

**Justice Pierre Craibites
(American jurist), Things
Muhammad Did for
Women:**



"Mohammad was probably the greatest champion of women's rights the world has ever seen." "Muhammad's outstanding contribution to the cause of women, resides in the property rights that he conferred upon the wives of his people. The juridical status of a wife, is so technical a term may be pardoned, is the same as that of a husband. The Moslem spouse as far as her property is concerned, is as free as a bird. The Law permits her to do with her financial assets as she pleases without consulting her consort. In such matters, he has no greater rights than would have any perfect stranger. A wife technically speaking does not even take her husband's name. A Moslem girl born Aisha bint Omar (Aisha daughter of Omar) may marry ten times, but her individuality is not absorbed by that of her various husbands. She is not a moon that shines through reflected light. She is a star planet, with a name and a legal personality of her own"

Uri Avnery (journalist and leftist activist in Occupied Palestine), Anti-Semitism: A Practical Manual:



“Muslim Spain was a paradise for the Jews, and there has never been a Jewish Holocaust in the Muslim world. Even pogroms were extremely rare. Muhammad decreed that the ‘Peoples of the Book’ (Jews and Christians) be treated tolerantly, subject to conditions that were incomparably more liberal than those in contemporary Europe were.

“The Muslims never imposed their religion by force on Jews and Christians, as shown by the fact that almost all the Jews expelled from Catholic Spain settled in the Muslim countries and flourished there. After centuries of Muslim rule, Greeks and Serbs remained thoroughly Christian.”

Sources:

(Mercy To The World: Muhammed (PBUHF), Br. Asifuddin Muhammed, 2012, Published by: Islamic Academy For Comparative Religion) - <https://archive.org/details/ProphetMUHAMMMPeaceBeUponHim/page/n3?q=history+of+Islam+may+be+entirely+derived>



Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 1

Take ten minutes to align the following legal texts with the appropriate lesson paragraphs from the lesson.

Quranic verses:

1. "And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" Allah said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know" (Quran, 2:30)
2. "Make no excuses that Day. You will only be recompensed for what you used to do" (Quran, 66:7)
3. "To Him ascends the good word, and righteous work raises it" (Quran, 35:10)
4. "Verily, all things We created in proportion and measure" (Quran, 54:49)
5. "Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know" (Quran, 2:151)
6. "But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration" (Quran, 35:43)
7. "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (Quran, 3:104)
8. "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Quran, 45:13)
9. "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will reach Him" (Quran, 86:6)

Key points from the lesson:

- ☐ The human is the greatest of all the beings and creatures in existence. He is the focus of the universe, and Allah has made him his ambassador.
- ☐ Allah Almighty is pure and generous, and because the existence of beings requires their happiness, Allah created them with various qualities and capabilities according to the law of causality.
- ☐ Allah has legislated an elaborate system of practices that instills in every human a sense of responsibility towards himself and the universe. It anchors this responsibility in the core of his being to afford him a positive and constructive vision of life and the universe.
- ☐ God made all things subservient to humans to help humans travel towards God.
- ☐ Our sense of happiness or misery is a manifestation of our proximity to or distance from the Almighty in accordance with Allah's cosmic laws and rules.
- ☐ The movement of humans occurs throughout the various stages of the earthly life and the afterlife, and is in accordance with cosmic laws that are never broken (the journey towards Allah).
- ☐ Because of the severity of the misery that is created by being far from Allah, Allah, in his kindness, sent messengers and guides with holy books and doctrines to guide humans to Him.
- ☐ Islam considers that helping humans to liberate themselves from corruption and injustice is a direct responsibility of the Muslim nation (Ummah).
- ☐ Using their will, wisdom and other attributes, humans are solely responsible for controlling their journey towards God. They determine whether they will come closer to Allah or whether they will distance themselves.

2

The Creation Strategy from an Islamic Perspective

“We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything in between for sport. We only created them for a purpose, but most of these ‘pagans’ do not know.”
(Surat Ad-Dukhan: 38-39)

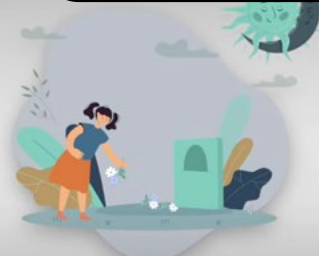


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■ The Creation Strategy - Vision and Mission

5:50

The Strategy of Creation in the Islamic Perspective

Strategic Vision

(The Supreme Goal)

Creation is not in vain

Allah created the universe for a great purpose and a noble goal, not for play or falsehood.

The Goal: Returning to Allah and drawing close to Him

This is the primary purpose of creating the entire universe and mankind within it.

“Did you think that We created you in play and that you would not be returned to Us?”
(Qur'an 23:115)

The Mechanism: Testing to bring out the best deeds.

Allah created humans, life, death, and destinies (like good and evil) as a field of choice for mankind.

The Aim: Human development and integration.

Striving in life pushes a person to become the best version of himself.

The Role: Man's stewardship on Earth

The message includes freeing humanity from oppression and developing the earth according to the divine method.

According to the Islamic perspective, the universe was not created randomly or in vain, but according to a precise divine strategy. This strategy consists of a grand vision (ultimate goal) and a practical mission (mechanism) to achieve that vision.

The Islamic understanding of the creation strategy unfolds from the core belief in absolute monotheism. Allah, the One and Only God, is the sole creator and sustainer of everything in existence. This profound truth underpins all Islamic practices, forming the bridge between faith and daily life.

Divine Purpose and Strategic Vision

The Quran eloquently refutes the notion that the universe is a mere plaything. Verses like "And We did not create the heaven and earth and that between them in vain" (Sad 27) and "Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?" (Quran 23:115) emphasize a grander design.

Allah's purpose for creation is laid bare: to return to Him and attain closeness to His divine presence. As expressed in the Quran, "Indeed, to Allah we belong and to Allah we shall return" (Al-Baqarah 156). This is the ultimate aim of existence, the strategic vision that guides the Islamic mission.

The Strategic Mission

But how do we achieve this lofty goal? What drives us towards closeness to Allah? The Quran provides a clear answer: "He who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" (Al-Mulk 2).

Life, according to this verse, is a testing ground. We are presented with a spectrum of choices, from darkness to light, good to evil, and deficiency to increase. This inherent duality fosters a dynamic tension, propelling us to strive for self-improvement, ethical conduct, and ultimately, closeness to Allah.

In essence, the creation strategy is a call to action. It invites us to become the best versions of ourselves, to navigate the complexities of life with wisdom and compassion, and ultimately, to find our way back to the divine source.

The Islamic vision is the purpose for which God (Allah) has created human beings and that is the divine purpose that Islam is designed to achieve. We can define the Islamic vision as:

“The holistic development of human beings with the aim of bringing them closer to Allah.”

The Islamic vision of life is derived from the fact that the universe and everything in it are in constant and perpetual motion, drawing closer to Allah and perfection. “Indeed, we belong to God, and to him we return” (Quran 2:156) “Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?” (Quran 23:115)

The human being is the central axis of this universe and is in perpetual motion towards perfection and proximity to the Almighty. In other words, he is in perpetual motion towards achieving the ultimate level of happiness, provided he does not choose to act contrary to

intellect and humanity. “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will reach Him.” (Quran 84:06)

The Islamic Mission

The Islamic Mission is the path that God created for achieving the Islamic Vision, and it can be summed up in this way:

“To worship Allah by cultivating the universe, and toiling within it to achieve salvation, happiness, and a livelihood according to Islamic principles.”

The Islamic mission is a quest for humanity. It involves making the world a safe and healthy



place where all creatures can thrive and flourish, and where all people can elevate themselves, achieve completeness and grow closer to the Almighty.

This mission entails helping all humans to attain humanity, irrespective of their beliefs. To this end, it aims to help us develop in a multitude of ways, achieve perfection and liberate ourselves from the twin snares of corruption and injustice, whatever form they may take. These traps can appear in many guises, including ignorance, poverty, mental or physical illness, servitude to humans or other beings and more besides. “Who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works.” (Quran 67:2).

“Allah is the Guardian of the believers—He brings them out of darkness and into light. As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness.” (Quran, 2:257)

This includes the development of human knowledge, will, wisdom, abilities, ethics, emotions, our relationship with Almighty Allah



and all other ontological attributes. The aim of this development is to bring people closer to Allah and to generate as much happiness for people as possible, both in this life and in the Hereafter.

Sayyid Mohammed Baqir Al Sadr, an eminent scholar of the twentieth century, said: “Allah has delegated to humans the task of ruling

and leading the universe and populating it. It is on this basis that the theory of people ruling themselves and the legitimacy of humankind ruling itself as Allah's vicegerent is founded. Through such vicegerency, humans are made distinct from all the other elements of the universe; thus, they merit being knelt to by angels and having all the seen and unseen powers as their subjects. Within this expansive concept, the process of divine vicegerency of humans on Earth means establishing social relationships on the basis of sincere servitude to Allah and denouncing servitude to names that symbolize exploitation, ignorance and tyranny." Allah says: "when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority" (Quran 2:30)."

The realization of this mission is what empowered Muslims to lead the development of human civilization in the Middle Ages, known in the West as the Dark Ages. "You are the best nation ever brought forth to men" (Quran 3:110)

Islamic Principles and Values

Through its structure of values and its cultural network, Islam implanted a set of principles and values in Islamic societies and in the core of every Muslim individual. Some of the most important principle and values are:

- **Servitude is for Allah alone.** This is the basis and premise for all foundations of thought, civilization and human behavior in life. "Judgment belongs only to God; He has commanded that you shall not serve any but Him. That is the right religion; but most men know not." (Quran 12:40)
- **Humanity.** Islam is characterized by a universal message of compassion, goodwill and peace, and benevolence towards all humankind. No one is to be deprived of goodness or discriminated against: "We did not send you but as a mercy to all the worlds" (Quran 21:107).

Islam also believes that all people are equal, and that the sole criterion for ranking human individuals is their degree of piety. "O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most Godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware." (Quran 49:13)

- **Social ethics and morality.** The message of Islam is a moral one. Its interest in building the moral aspect of humankind is linked to the educational doctrine regarding the cultivation of a noble moral character and the building of an ideal

society. The Prophet (PBUHF) said: "Religion is behavior" and added, "I was not sent but to perfect good behavior."

- **Reality.** Islamic legislation provides a framework for the formative aspects of man, and its laws are based on and compatible with this foundation. Many of its rulings may be withheld to make allowances for hardship and distress. "Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity". (Quran 2:286)
- **Respect for reason.** The Islamic message depends on reason to persuade the mind and on evidence to prove its truth. This is

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المبدأ الأول
العبودية لله وحده

وهذا الأساس والمنطلق لكل أبنية الفكر
والحضارة والسلوك البشري في الحياة.

Islamic Concepts and Values

4:37

why the Quran calls for an open mind and urges people to think and reflect upon their own thoughts and actions, their world and the message, which has been delivered to them. “Say, ‘I only advise you of one [thing]—that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought.’ There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you before a severe punishment”. (Quran 34:46)

- **Attention to intention.** For the Great Prophet (PBUHF) said: “Actions are but by intentions, for each human shall have that which he intended.” Islam ascribes the utmost importance to intention. It considers the intention to be the spirit of the act and so the basis for its assessment. It concentrates all its attention on teaching goodwill and directing humans towards it.
- **Freedom of religion.** God says, “No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error” (Quran 2:256). Our intellect is what compels us to look at and contemplate creation (and hence the creator), as well as to consider the validity of claims of prophet hood and miracles. It would not be right then to follow others without first consulting our intellect, because it is the tool to measure the truth.
- **Recognition of all divine religions.** We believe that all prophets and messengers are right, and we believe in their infallibility. Denying, insulting or mocking them is considered apostasy and heresy.

Fundamental Principles and Core Values in Islam

Through its intellectual system, Islam instills a set of fundamental principles and core values in the conscience of both the individual and society.

Worship of God Alone

It is the foundation and starting point of all human thought and behavior in life.

Humanity

A universal message characterized by mercy, peace, and equality among all people.

Attention to Intention (Purpose)

Intention is the spirit of an action and the basis for its evaluation: "Actions are judged by intentions."

Morals and Social Etiquette

The message of Islam is ethical, aiming to build upright character and a virtuous society.

Freedom of Belief

"There is no compulsion in religion"; the intellect leads to independent faith based on conviction.

Realism

Islamic legislation takes human nature into account, and rulings are lifted in cases of hardship and difficulty.

Recognition of the Heavenly Religions

Belief in all prophets and messengers, acknowledging that they are truthful; denying them is considered disbelief.

Respect for the Intellect

The message is based on persuasion through evidence and proof, encouraging humans to think and reflect.



Optional Reading

ISLAMIC STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

(from Islamic Strategy book)

1. General Strategic Objective

Based on the Islamic Strategic Mission, we can say that the general Islamic strategic objective is to promote and instill the Islamic culture (with all its components) among all human beings at the levels of intellectual perception, heart-felt faith and practical behavior.

This general strategic objective diversifies into four other strategic goals as follows.

2. Detailed Strategic Objectives

■ Objective One:

Universality of Islam i.e. Islam reaches each and every corner of the Earth, the maximum

possible number of humans embrace Islam, upholding their complete freedom, will, and conviction-based desire, not under duress or coercion of any kind.

His Almighty Allah Says: “[Invite \(all\) to the Way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious: for thy Lord knoweth best, who have strayed from His Path, and who receive guidance](#)” (Surah Al Nahl, 125).(Quran, 16:125)

Sayyid Qutb says: “Islam is calling for itself as a universal message to all humans. Mohammed (PBUHF) did not come for Quraysh or for Arabs of peninsula only, but He was sent for all humans in all countries of the Earth. The Holy Quran says: “[We have not sent thee but as a universal \(Messenger\) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them \(against sin\)...](#)” (Surah Saba, 28)(Quran, 34:28).

Islam considers itself a benefit, blessing and mercy to all humans “We sent thee not, but as a Mercy for all creatures” (Surah Al Anbiya’, 107)(Quran, 21:107). According to Islam’s view of humanity, it wants all people to have welfare, mercy and guidance and it does not want this to be restricted to a specific people or race, as the case with Judaism, for instance! However, Islam does not want to coerce people to follow it: “Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error...” (Surah Al Baqarah, 256)(Quran, 2:256). All that Islam wants is the freedom of mission among all the people of the Earth so that they would receive the absolute benefit that Islam brings. It does not restrict a specific community and wants the freedom of belief to be granted to its followers.”

Mohammed Al-Hussaini Al-Shirazi (1994, 152) said that: “The global Islamic movement should have the characteristics of amnesty, peace and pacifism not only with friends but also with non-followers and enemies. This is what we find in the bibliographies of the great reformers.”

■ Objective Two:

Deepening our understanding of Islam and its concepts, particularly the one related to a human’s exercise of his life.

The idea is that in order to promote and instill the Islamic culture (the general strategic objective) we need to deeply know and understand it in all the different respects of interest to humanity.

Al-Alwani says (2001, 20): “Thus, the Islamization of Knowledge is the most significant rule to revive the religion, reconstruct the polar nation and produce the modern Islamic civilized project.”

Sayyid Al Sadr (1428, 377) says: “The greatest responsibility upon us is to follow the acts of prophets and custodians ... this great responsibility requires us to simultaneously go into theoretical research.”

Sayyid Al Sadr (1428, 377) further says: “We should paint a picture of Islamic Jurisprudence, at the level of the modern

world. At the level of the needs of this world, at the level required to solve the problems of this world, at the level of the many issues placed before humanity nowadays that have been dealt with by perverse human ideologies offering conflicting remedies.”

■ **Objective Three:**

Instilling Islamic knowledge and culture into the hearts, consciousness and action of both Muslim individuals and communities, through effective, impactful techniques. The goal here is to form the Muslim according to this knowledge, and develop his perspective of the Universe and Life. His behavior then appropriately stems from the culture of Islam.

Islam came to refine and provide for humans. In turn, promotion of Islam and knowledge, can be nothing but service to this goal.

His Almighty Allah says, "It is He Who has sent amongst the Unlettered an apostle from among themselves, to rehearse to them His Signs, to sanctify them, and to instruct them in Scripture and Wisdom...." (Surah Al Jumu'ah, 2)(Quran, 62:2). Thus, the aim is to purify man.

■ **Objective Four:**

Elimination of all material backwardness such as ignorance, disease, poverty, insecurity, and prejudice, and to achieve the required elements (economic, cultural, health and political) for the formation of healthy societies and individuals at the level of the Islamic region and the world.

Sayyid Qutb (1980, 25) says: "Islam came to administer justice all over the Earth and to spread equity among all humans, and justice in all its types."

His Almighty Allah says: "Thus We have made you [Muslims] a Wasat (just) (and the best) nation, that you be witnesses over mankind and the Messenger (Muhammad) be a witness over you" (Surah Al Baqarah, Aayah 143) (Quran, 2:143).



Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 2

For each question, choose the concept that is most consistent with the verse. You have a half a minute to do so:

1. "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will reach Him."
 - ☐ Humankind as the focal point of God's creation
 - ☐ The involvement of humans in continuous movement towards God Almighty
 - ☐ The principle of humankind
 - ☐ The Islamic vision of life.
2. "We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations"
 - ☐ The message of Islam is a moral message
 - ☐ The purpose of life is to spread mercy among humankind
 - ☐ Islam is a universal message characterized by mercy
 - ☐ The recognition of all heavenly religions
3. "He is the One Who created death and life in order to test which of you is best in deeds."
 - ☐ Allah is the Creator of Death and Inexistence.
 - ☐ Death is the way we return to Him, Exalted is He.
 - ☐ Islam is a universal message, encompassing everyone.
 - ☐ A real and complete life is the reward given to those who perform good actions in this world.
4. "And when they Lord said to the angels, 'I am setting in the earth a viceroy'"
 - ☐ Allah's appointment of a successor
 - ☐ Humankind as the focal point of God's creation
 - ☐ The principle of freedom of belief
 - ☐ The Islamic vision of life

5. "It is You we worship and You we ask for help"
 - ☐ Allah's appointment of a successor
 - ☐ The principle of realism
 - ☐ The principle of servitude to God
 - ☐ The Islamic vision of life
6. "No compulsion is there in religion. Rectitude has become clear from error"
 - ☐ The goal of life is integration and perfection
 - ☐ The principle of the importance of intention (niyyah)
 - ☐ The recognition of all the heavenly religions
 - ☐ The principle of freedom of belief
7. "Did you suppose that We created you aimlessly, and that you will not be brought back to Us?"
 - ☐ Our message revolves around helping people
 - ☐ Islam is a universal message
 - ☐ The purpose of the creation of life
 - ☐ The principle of servitude to God
8. "Allah does not charge a soul except within its capacity"
 - ☐ The concept of reality as our rightful burden
 - ☐ Message based on sound reason
- ☐ The principle of freedom of religion
- ☐ The achievement of maximum human happiness
9. "Surely we belong to God, and to him we return"
 - ☐ Humankind as the focal point of God's creation
 - ☐ The Islamic vision of life
 - ☐ The Islamic message
 - ☐ The principle of servitude
10. "You are the best nation ever brought forth to men"
 - ☐ Islam is a universal message
 - ☐ Our message revolves around helping people
 - ☐ The principle of humanity
 - ☐ The message of Islam is a moral message
11. "...who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works"
 - ☐ Our message revolves around helping people
 - ☐ Humankind as the focal point of God's creation
 - ☐ The principle of humanity
 - ☐ The purpose of life is integration and perfection



Part Two

The Islamic Faith

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3

How Can We Reach The Truth?

“Have they not travelled throughout the land so their hearts may reason, and their ears may listen? Indeed, it is not the eyes that are blind, but it is the hearts in the chests that grow blind.” (Surat Al-Hajj, 46) (Quran, 22:46)



The Path to Truth: Reason and Revelation in Islam

Islam distinguishes between two spheres of truths based on the human intellect's ability to be guided to them, while affirming the complementary roles of both.

The First Domain: What Reason Perceives



Field: General knowledge of creed

Truths directly within the reach of human intellectual capacity.



The Primary Tool (Reason)

Allah placed the responsibility of perceiving these truths on the mind and granted it the capacity to do so.



The Role of Prophets: Stimulating the mind to reflect

Sending messengers and signs is an urge for the mind to contemplate and reach the truth.

The Second Domain: What Requires Revelation



Field: Matters of the Unseen and details of Sharia rulings

Truths related to realms beyond the limits of direct human perception.



The Primary Tool (Revelation)

Allah placed the responsibility of knowing these truths on divine messages.



The Role of Reason: Proving the authenticity of revelation and understanding it

Reason must be used to verify the source of revelation and comprehend its objectives.

Introduction

It is perfectly possible for someone to cultivate a positive mission for their lives, regardless of which school of thought they adhere to. This is a beautiful thing in and of itself, but it should lead us to ask the question: does this mission arise from the person's true faith and beliefs, or are their words merely superficial, without any ideological grounding? If they are performing actions without deeper thought and consideration, then they are merely going through the motions and may experience turbulent feelings and behaviors as a result.

This Islamic doctrine, on which the Islamic vision of life is based, is what we will address in the following lessons.

In this part of "The Islamic Faith", we will discuss the source of existence and all life in the universe, humankind's relationship with the universe and thus humankind's purpose in life. We will also discuss the laws that control human activities and the flow of life around them, how humans can achieve their goals in accordance with these laws, the support they



receive from Allah to help them achieve these goals, and finally, the rewards that humans receive from Him for achieving these goals and the punishment that comes with failure. Finally, we will discuss how all of this leads us towards our “vision and mission”.

HOW CAN WE REACH THE TRUTH?

To know the truth and worship accordingly is the foundation on which the Islamic intellectual framework is based. This is why intellect, wisdom and knowledge are such important requirements in Islam. It is no coincidence that the first word revealed in the Quran is “[read](#)”. (Quran 96:1) (the first word of the Quran revealed to The Prophet was ‘READ’

In the Quran, Allah tells us that the mission of the prophets is to educate and purify: “[As We sent to you a messenger from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know.](#)” (Quran 2:151)

Islam differentiates between two domains or “circles” of truths, one of which is open to human comprehension, and one, which is beyond it:

First circle: Knowledge of the doctrine in its entirety: It is within the grasp of the human intellect. Allah made the comprehension of these truths the responsibility of the intellect and granted it the necessary powers to achieve this. The sending of the prophets and the divine scripture was merely a way to stimulate the human mind into contemplation, hence the strong emphasis in Islam on reflection and meditation, which is referenced clearly in tens of Quranic verses. “Say, “I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought. “[There is not in your companion any madness.](#)” (Quran 34:46)

In a similar vein, Imam Ali (AS) said, “Reflect on the kingdoms of the heavens and the earth is the worship of the faithful.”



Second circle: Metaphysical issues, details of the Hereafter, and the rules of the legal system: These are not within the grasp of the human intellect, for they are related to the unseen and other worlds; without the aid of divine revelation, and are beyond the scope of human comprehension and rationality. Islamic legal provisions, for example, are aimed at the development of humankind and its environment in the best way possible, thus enabling humans to live better lives on both an individual and a communal level in both this world and the Hereafter.

This means that if we want to consider the aforementioned legal provisions from an

intellectual perspective, or to gain wisdom from them, this would not only require a powerful intellect but clear knowledge of the details of the afterlife, the laws that govern it and their impact on our salvation or wretchedness therein. However, we cannot know any of these details.

This is why Allah revealed the truths of this second circle to humankind through heavenly messages: “We do not punish [any community] until We have sent [it] a messenger.” (Quran 16:15)

But even when considering this second circle, we must draw on our intellect to be able to affirm the validity of revealed messages and their goals. The truths must be interpreted by our intellect to gain full certainty of the following concepts: Muhammad (PBUHF) is a prophet of Allah. Quran is the book of Allah which was revealed by Him, that those of his sayings that have reached us actually came from him (and that he authorized us to follow them), and that what we understand from the mouthpiece of the revelation (that is, the Quran and the

Sunnah) is actually what is meant. We can interpret the facts either by deliberating with our intellect or by following the rules that the Prophet (PBUHF) set forth to help us understand the text in the correct way.

However, connecting belief in Allah with supernatural occurrences, instead of a rational belief, is extremely dangerous, because it creates a massive opening for tricksters and magicians to infiltrate our societies and lead them towards darkness. Although there are divine interventions across history, through miracles, to support mankind's march towards Allah, this is something that He, Almighty, decides to do when He deems it is timely, and not when we want it or when we think it is best. Allah, Exalted is He, gave us our minds as the main method to establish the truth and to recognize Allah's allies and to guide us to Him. Disbelievers insist on connecting knowing the truth to seeing miracles, and this is something Allah refuses, despite His absolute power over everything. Quran highlights this when says: "They challenge [the Prophet], "We will never believe in you

until you cause a spring to gush forth from the earth for us, or until you have a garden of palm trees and vineyards, and cause rivers to flow abundantly in it, or cause the sky to fall upon us in pieces, as you have claimed, or bring Allah and the angels before us, face to face, or until you have a house of gold, or you ascend into heaven—and even then we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book that we can read." Say, "Glory be to my Lord! Am I not only a human messenger?" And nothing has prevented people from believing when guidance comes to them except their protest: "Has Allah sent a human as a messenger?" (Surat Al-Israa, 90-94) (Quran, 17:90-94).

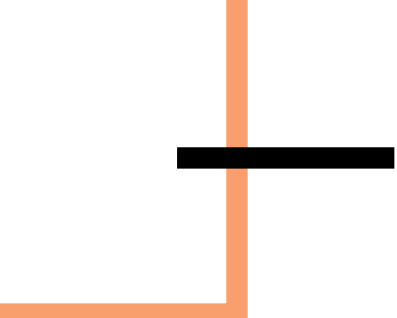


Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 3

Determine whether each of the following items comes from the first or the second circle of knowledge. Allow yourself 10 seconds for each item:

- ☐ The sanctity (or otherwise) of speaking ill of others
- ☐ The existence of God
- ☐ The sanctity (or otherwise) of listening to songs
- ☐ The protection of the Quran against distortion
- ☐ The existence of the balance and the path to the Day of Judgment
- ☐ The obligation to pray
- ☐ The doctrine of monotheism
- ☐ The specifics of prayer
- ☐ The sanctity (or otherwise) of usury
- ☐ Allah as an absolute and unlimited entity
- ☐ The existence of the Hereafter
- ☐ The sanctity (or otherwise) of eating pork
- ☐ The degree of the punishment of unenlightened minors
- ☐ The need for women to wear hijab
- ☐ Divine justice



**“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.”
(Surat An-Nur, 35) (Quran, 24:35)**

4

Allah, The Almighty



 Watch The Video

 Allah - His Majesty - The Essence of Existence

8:08

Allah, Glorified and Exalted: The Essence of Existence and Its Source

Created beings are “existent,” while Allah Himself is Existence.

Creation: manifestations of Divine Existence.

**Allah
The Essence of
Existence**

The existence of created beings is an acquired attribute, whereas the existence of Allah is His very Essence, just as wetness originates from water itself.

Beings are manifestations of Divine Existence and do not possess independent existence. Our relationship with Allah is like the relationship between light and the sun; light is not the sun, yet it is a manifestation of it.

The existence of Allah is one, simple, absolute, and unlimited.

For the opposite of existence is non-existence (which does not exist), therefore nothing can limit the existence of Allah.

Our relationship with Allah resembles the relationship of our thoughts to us—indeed, it is even closer.

A mental image is a real form of existence, but it is a reflection of us and a manifestation of our own expressions.

“...and no attribute can be ascribed to Him as ‘existent’.”

Imam Ali (peace be upon him)

The existence of another god is impossible.

Anything other than the “Essence of Existence” is non-existence. The multiplicity of gods necessarily implies limitation.

According to the Islamic vision of life, the beginning of this life here and our subsequent move to the next comes from God alone. “Indeed, we belong to Allah, and to Him do we indeed return” (Quran 2:156). Since He is the source of all life and existence, then surely, He must also be the essence of existence with his infinite release.

Whenever a living being is described as having a trait, we should question the source of that trait and how that being came to possess it. The only time this does not apply is when the trait is inherent to the being, or when the being itself is the embodiment of that trait.

For example, if we picked up a book and found that it was wet, then we might naturally ask how this had happened. However, it would be highly unusual for us to wonder about the wetness of the water itself, because we know that water is the embodiment of wetness.

It should be obvious that existence is not an inherent trait, since all beings and all inanimate things were nothing before they existed (and even the components that they are made from were nothing before they existed). Based on this notion, we must question the source of their existence, and this question leads us to Allah Almighty, who is the source of existence itself.



▶ Watch The Video

الله
فاله إذا ليس موجوداً مثل بقية

■ How Do We Know That Allah Truly Exists?

5:03⁶⁴

Therefore, God does not exist in the same sense that everything else exists, but rather He is existence itself, and thus all things that exist come from Him in the same way that wetness comes from water and light comes from the sun.

Allah, Exalted is He, said: “O humanity! It is you who stand in need of Allah, but Allah ‘alone’ is the Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy.” (Surat Fatir, 15) (Quran, 35:15)

In other words, every being in the universe is composed of two aspects: identity and existence. For example, your identity is a “human” and you exist as such. The first aspect is fully theoretical, since it does not have an independent existence outside of the theoretical realm. It is abstract and does not hold any bearing on existence per se, because a being’s identity is just the set of characteristics and constraints that apply to its existence. As for the second aspect, is basically the characteristics that can actually be found for the being. For example, your face’s features are your face – and they are not something independent of your face, and they are just

the characteristics that define it. Another example is a body being its mere physical extension, size and features. This applies to all beings in existence, except to Allah, Exalted is He. Allah is only defined by existence, since He is Existence itself, and His Identity is His very Existence.

Because God Almighty is the essence of existence, and where there is no existence there is nothingness (which is the absolute absence of existence), He can only be a single existence: simple (not comprised of distinct parts) and absolute (not mixed with anything else). In other words, He is “pure existence”.

As such, He is not subject to perception, let alone sight, for He has no boundaries, constraints, or limitations by which He can be perceived.

If He were observable, then He would be a being like us and would need the essence of existence from the source in order to exist.

Imam Ali (AS) said: “Praise be to Allah... and whose claim (to obedience) cannot be

satisfied by those who attempt to do so, whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the divings of understanding cannot reach; He for whose description no limit has been laid down, no eulogy exists.” (Nahj Al-Balagha, Sermon 1)

This shows us how God has all the characteristics and qualities of perfection and infallibility and is free from any shortcomings and defects. It shows us that His attributes are His being and vice versa. His might is His wisdom, His sight and hearing, and all His attributes are united in the essence of a simple, singular existence.

Imam Ali (AS) said: “The perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure, and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute.”

That is also, why it is impossible for there to be another god, for the existence of another

god would imply that He is something other than God. There is nothing other than God except nothingness, for He is the essence of all existence.

If there were other gods, then each god would be limited by the other gods and could thus be perceived by these limitations. This means that they would exist in the same way that everything else exists and would not be the essence of existence (Allah Almighty).

Beings and objects do not limit God Almighty for their existence, even though real, is only in relation to God, and they can only exist thanks to Him. If this were not so, the existence of the Almighty would be limited by His own creations, an impossibility!

The Quran and the hadiths emphasize at length that Allah exists everywhere and is not limited by (or to) any place. And even though we actually exist in reality, we still remain manifestations of the divine presence. This may seem confusing at first, but a simple way to think of this (and a most apt comparison) is

the fact that light and heat are manifestations of the sun, yet they are not the sun, and at the same time, their presence is not contrary to the presence of the sun. All of these presences can coexist in complete harmony.

“And to Allah belongs the east and the west. So wherever you [might] turn, there is the Face of Allah. Indeed, Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing”. (Quran 2:115)

“We indeed created man; and We know what his soul whispers within him, and We are nearer to him than the jugular vein”. (Quran 50:16)

God Almighty is the One and only. There is nothing like Him. He is Ancient, yet ongoing and everlasting. He is the First and the Last, All Knowing, Wise, Just, Ever-Living, Capable, All-Sufficient, All-Hearing, All Seeing and never to be described in the same way as other beings. He is not an object nor an image, not essence nor a visible thing. He has

no weight or lightness, no movement or stillness, no limits of place and time, and He cannot be pointed out. He has no likeness or partner, no opponent, no companion or son, no associate, and no one is like him. The eyes cannot see him, but he sees the eyes.

Imam Ali (AS)*: "Praise be to Allah, who is not afflicted by any scale of worries or by deep intelligent thinkers. There are no boundaries to His attributes nor any way to express him... And the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is not inherent in the thing to which it is attributed, and anything to which something is attributed must be different from the attribute.

“Thus, whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like, and whoever recognizes His like regards Him as two; and whoever regards Him as two recognizes parts for Him; and whoever recognizes parts for Him mistakes Him; and whoever mistakes Him

singles Him out; and whoever singles Him out admits limitations for Him; and whoever admits limitations for Him numbers Him..."

And in another of his speeches (AS)*: "Eyes have not seen Him through eyesight, but the hearts have seen Him through the truths of belief. My God cannot be described by scale, motion, stillness or activity. He is in all things but not through amalgamation. Distinct yet inconspicuous. Above everything and surpassed by none, in front of everything but to whom no frontier is attributed, inside everything not in the way all other things are penetrated, and external to them, not in the way one is external to another."

*** Source:**

Nahj Al Balagha (A Collection of Speeches (sermons) of Imam Ali), by Al Sharif Al Rida,(Radhi) Investigated by: Al Sheikh Fares Al Hassoun, Prepared By: The Center of Ideological studies, first speech http://www.haydarya.com/maktaba_moktasah/07/book_00/main.htm



Optional Reading

Part from The Journey of a Toiler (Novel)"

It was one of the hottest days of the summer. As we walked to Uncle Issa's luxurious car, I tried to arrange my thoughts and questions in my mind. The car had leather seats, and while this was a sign of luxury in vehicles, it had the adverse effect of making them very hot in sunny weather.

- * "Sorry, I forgot to cover the windscreen."
- "No problem."
- * "You seemed to accept the fact that the seat was very hot. Why?"



- "Isn't it natural? The weather is very hot."
- * "What if it was a winter day? Would you have thought the seat was very hot?"
- "Of course not. The seat wouldn't be hot in winter."
- * "Why?"
- "There is no reason for it to be hot. What is your point?"
- * "Bear with me. Would you accept that fire is hot, even in winter?"
- "Yes, sure."
- * "So what is the difference between the seat and the fire with regards to being hot? Why would you accept the fire being hot in winter, but not the seat?"
- "Fire is fire, and can never be anything other than hot, while the temperature of the seat depends on the temperature of air around it."
- * "Let me rephrase your statement. You believe that heat cannot be separated from fire because heat is inherent to fire, while other things can be separated from heat and be hot or cold depending on the outside temperature. Therefore, the temperature of these things is contingent upon the outside temperature."
- "Yes, you could say so."
- The streets became lighter as the heat mounted, and it did not take us long to reach Kargeen restaurant at Madinat Qaboos. Uncle Issa invited me to dine with him. He parked his car beside the restaurant, reclined his seat and looked at me.
- * "Okay, good. Note that even some degree of heat can be attributed to the chair regardless of its temperature, right?"
- "True; the outside heat, as you expressed, is an accidental factor. That much is clear, but how do we distinguish between inherent and accidental attributes?" I asked.

- 
- * "You said it in the beginning. If you can separate the attribute from the object it is attributed to, then it is accidental; otherwise, it is inherent. This separation need not be external or physical; it can be mental also. Let me ask you this: Is tall stature inherent or accidental to man?"
 - "Obviously, it is accidental. Can you now tell me what all of this has to do with our topic?"
 - * "Don't rush it, and tell me: what about the liquidity in liquid water?"
 - "Inherent."
 - * "So you see; if the attribute is accidental, you would naturally ask about the reason it is there, whereas if it is inherent, you would not. If the paper is wet, you would ask why, but you need not ask why water is wet; it would not be a smart question, would it?"
 - "Right."
 - * "So is existence an inherent feature of you or an accidental one? Is your existence mentally separable from you or not?"
 - "It is accidental, because there was a time I did not exist as I am and there will be a time when I die."
 - * "Right, and what about the other things around you? Is existence inherent in them or accidental to them?"
 - 'By the same token, because they could have been non-existent, existence is accidental to them.'
 - * "Very well. If existence is accidental and not inherent to them, they must be lacking existence at their core, and therefore existence must have been given to them. Isn't this so? And this, in turn, means there must be another being as a source for being."
 - I pondered his words for some time. "Yes, indeed."

- * "This source of being is rich in existence and existence is inherent to it and inseparable from it. You can say it emanates existence, or let's say it is The Existence, which we call Allah."
- "Uncle, this is a clear proof for the being of Allah, but can I speak honestly?"
- * "Of course you can."
- "I acknowledge that this proves the presence of a creator, but it doesn't say anything about Him being benevolent and omnipotent and kind to us, or that He does not try to fool us or do injustice to us, or that He is not incomplete."
- * "Yes, it does. Didn't you agree that existence is accidental to all other beings? What criteria did we use to decide if it was accidental or inherent?"
- "Refresh my memory, please."
- * "We said that if the attribute is mentally or physically separable from the object it is attributed to, then it is accidental to it; otherwise, it is inherent to it."
- "So why do you think existence is accidental to these beings?"
- * "Because all of these things can be imagined without really being there."
- "And that implies there is an aspect of deficiency to their existence, because to imagine something is to have a mental boundary for it, and if something has a boundary, it has a deficiency beyond that limit. Do you agree?"
- * I thought about it for some time. "Yes. I suppose it does."
- "And therefore, the source of existence cannot be imagined without really being there. It cannot be imagined at all, or it would fall in the same group as these contingent creatures."
- * "Right."

- “This means it has no limits, for if it had limits, it would have a boundary and we would be able to imagine it in our minds. In other words, it has no limits or boundaries in its existence. This also implies that it is one simple, non-compound being with no parts or separable attributes. Compound things can be imagined by imagining their parts, and limited things can be defined. Isn’t that how we define things - by their limits and boundaries?”
- * “Oh my, it is so simple, yet so complicated.”
- “This proves that Allah has attributes of completion and perfect existence. It also proves that He is incapable of any deficiency.”
- * “It seems clear, yet I need to spend some time thinking it over.”
- “Now think about this: what could be simple, one, unlimited, and a source of existence? In other words, existence emanates from it?”
- * “Oh, my God,” I said loudly, “it is The Existence. How many times have I heard that Allah is pure existence - but I never understood it in this way?”
- “Yes. That is right. As there is nothing out there but existence, and there is no such thing as nothingness, then all that is out there is existence, pure existence; and this must be limitless existence, because what could the boundary of existence be if there is nothing else out there?”
- * “This is getting complicated.”
- “I will stop at this point to let you contemplate at length, but before that, I need to clarify one more point. Pure existence is simple, not compound, and has no parts, as I just mentioned. This means the attributes of existence are nothing but existence itself. What I mean is that there is no reparability of the attribute and the attributable. It is just one thing: the attribute and the attributable.”
- * “This is really big.”

- Silence fell for few moments, then I said, “Now I can relate to the words of Imam Ali in one of his sermons: “Praise is due to Allah.... Whom the height of intellectual courage cannot appreciate, and the divings of understanding cannot reach; He for whose description no limit has been laid down, no eulogy exists... the foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him, the perfection of acknowledging Him is to testify Him, the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness, the perfection of believing in His Oneness is to regard Him Pure, and the perfection of His purity is to deny Him attributes, because every attribute is a proof that it is different from that to which it is attributed and everything to which something is attributed is different from the attribute. Thus whoever attaches attributes to Allah recognizes His like...and who pointed at Him admitted limitations for Him; and who admitted limitations for Him numbered Him...”

Uncle Issa smiled in satisfaction. I also enjoyed understanding. I felt a chill, as if a divine energy was moving throughout my entire body and soul. I had never felt this peaceful; it was a beautiful feeling. We got out of the car, but said nothing. I was deep in my thoughts, turning the new concepts repeatedly. I was lost, but now I had more certainty. My uncle left me alone in my silence. We settled at a table in the restaurant.

- * “Why don’t they teach us these wonderful things in the mosque? Why do none of the scholars at the mosque present this in their sermons?”
- “We shall think on that after we order our lunch.”
- * “I’m not familiar with this place. You do the ordering.”
- By the time the food came, we were still silent. I was digesting the new concepts. “Uncle. By this notion, we can also prove monotheism, can’t we?”



- * "I agree, but you tell me how."
 - "If there were other gods, then each would be limited by the other, as the second would begin where the first ends, and vice versa, and that would make both of them limited, which would make their existence accidental instead of inherent."
 - * "Excellent, you got it right."
 - "But then, don't we set the boundaries for Allah? I mean, Allah can't be wherever I am - no two things can occupy the same place."
 - * "Our existence, as real as it is, is not the same as the existence of Allah because that - as you implied - would set limits to Allah and defeat this whole concept of proof, won't it?"
- I was trying to find an answer to the riddle. How could our existence be very and at the same time not the same as Allah's existence? What did that mean?
- "Let me make it easier for you. Do you know of anywhere in the universe where there is absolutely nothing else, meaning that Allah could be there?"
 - * "What I know from physics in school is that there is no such thing as absolute vacuum; there is always something everywhere. Are you trying to say there is no place for Allah to be?"
 - "That can't be true, can it? In the Quran and Hadeeth, you can find ample references to the fact that there is no place free of Allah. "We are nearer to him than his life-vein", so how could Allah be less near to man than man is to himself?"
 - * "That's right, I never thought about it before."
 - * "Although we and other things really exist, our existence is merely an emanation for the divine existence. This is much like light and heat being emanations of the sun. Neither of them is the sun, nor do they compete with the sun for space."

- * “That reminds me of Imam Ali’s description of Allah: “He is with everything but not in physical nearness. He is different from everything but not in physical separation” - but I still can’t imagine how we are emanations of Allah and yet not part of Him, and still have a real existence.”
- “You can’t. Because imagination requires fully comprehending Him and we know that full comprehension of Allah is not possible.”

That evening, Uncle Issa (‘Isa) dropped me home. I was utterly thrilled by happiness as I walked home through the narrow, intricate alleys of Sur Al Lawatia. I was eager to see my mother and grandmother and to play with my sisters. I felt I had been too busy with myself for too long when they needed me. I had been selfish, and it was time for me to make it up to them.

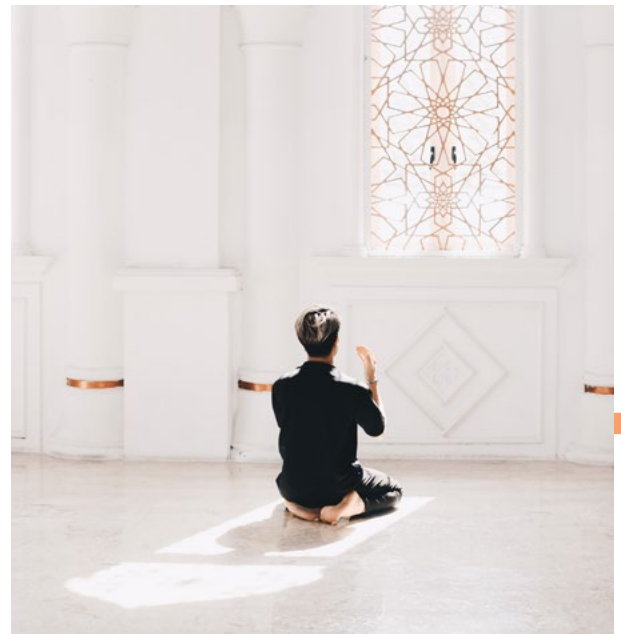
When I got home, I greeted everyone as if I had come from a long and bitter trip away. I told my mother about the discussion with Uncle Issa (‘Isa). My mother listened attentively, smiling

every now and then. She felt happy for me. Grandma, however, was frowning, and felt unhappy about the topics I had discussed with my uncle.

I felt sleepless that night. I got up and sat on my bed, mulling over Hadith quotes from the Prophet and the Imams and the texts of prayers that related to the concepts of Uncle Issa’s discussion. I felt like someone who had returned to his beloved after a long time away. Everyone else was asleep. I sneaked out of the bed, ablated () and started praying the night prayer. I felt deep reverence of Allah throughout every part of my being and every corner of my heart. There was nothing could express the strength of my feeling towards Allah. I took the book of prayers, but this time, I was browsing it with new ideas and concepts in my mind. I was scarcely aware of the time passing until I heard the call for dawn prayer (). I prayed the dawn prayer, went back to bed and slept deeply.

I do not know how long I had been sleeping, but I woke up with a part of Imam Hussain’s (Husayn’s) prayer in my mind. It was part of

his prayer on the day of Arafah () : “How can You be figured out through that whose existence relies on You? Can anything other than You hold a (kind of) manifestation that You lack and thus it may act as an appearance for You? When have You ever been absent so that You may need something to point to You? When have You ever been far-off so that traces may lead to You?” I reflected on the subject: when there is heat, we spontaneously and without further thought know that there must be a self-generating source for that heat, even before we discover it for ourselves. This is what this prayer tries to highlight: that existence in itself, irrespective of the various things that exist, is proof for an inherent source of existence or “pure existence”, which is God. As such, we need no further proof of God’s existence. How could we be so stupid as to demand such a thing? Later on, I would find out that the proof I was talking about is called the “proof of the righteous”.





Essay Activity External

Write an article (between 200 to 500 words) about the difference between “proof of contingency of quiddity” and the “proof of contingency of existence” to prove Allah’s existence.





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 4

1. Find an ayah in the Quran with the following message: That God lights up the heavens and the earth, thereby causing them to appear, and that He emanates existence onto things, causing them to appear after being in the darkness of nothingness, just as light shines onto things and causes them to appear after being hidden in darkness. Allow yourself 5 minutes. You may use electronic research tools if you wish.

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2. Find 4 ayāt in the Quran indicating that the existence of life and death are equally due to God alone. Allow yourself 10 minutes. You may use electronic research tools if you wish.

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5

Mankind—God's Vicegerent on Earth

“Remember, O Prophet when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to create a human being from sounding clay moulded from black mud. * So when I have fashioned him and had a spirit of My Own ‘creation’ breathed into him, fall down in prostration to him.” (Al-Hijr 28-29)





▶ Watch The Video

النمو الحقيقي في منظور الإسلام أن ي
تلك القيم التي يؤمن بتوحيدها

■ Mankind—God's Vicegerent on Earth

4:17

Human: God's Vicegerent on Earth



Divine Vicegerency

God announced to the angels His intention to appoint the human being as His vicegerent on earth. This is the central concept in the Islamic vision of life.
"Indeed, I will place upon the earth a vicegerent."



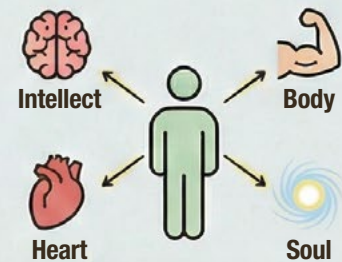
The Mission: Two Sides of One Coin

Vicegerency is fulfilled through worship of God (the purpose) and the cultivation of the earth (the means). Both are inseparable for human development and advancement.



Divine Support

The human being was created in the best form with four dimensions (body, intellect, heart, and soul). The entire universe was subjected to him to assist him in fulfilling his mission.



Growth and Integration And drawing closer to God Almighty

The Supreme Goal

The ultimate objective of this journey is growth, integration, drawing closer to God Almighty, and attaining the great success.
"And for that let the competitors compete."

Man's vicegerency of God on Earth is the foundation of the Islamic vision of the life and universe: "when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority.'" (Quran 2:30); And the Almighty said, "And when thy Lord said to the angels, 'See, I am creating a mortal of a clay of mud molded. When I have shaped him, and breathed My spirit in him, fall you down, bowing before him!'" (Quran 15: 28 - 31).

The vicegerency of humans on Earth is the concept whereby humankind worships Allah Almighty by cultivating the Earth. It means people worshipping God using every one of their senses, and by ensuring that their actions and inactions are in conformity with what pleases God and with Islamic teachings.

Earth is the arena where—through man and woman's toil in pursuit of their livelihoods, security, and happiness, and in accordance with the guidelines of Islamic teachings—humans embody servitude in all its manifestations towards God and achieve divine succession. The worship of God and the cultivation of the Earth are two sides of

the same coin, and they are the path on which humanity progresses and is bound to achieve majesty.

The Almighty said, "And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed." (Quran, 62:10). And the Almighty said: "And out of His mercy, He made for you the night and the day that you may rest therein and [by day] seek from His bounty and [that] perhaps you will be grateful." (Quran, 28:73)

From this, we can see that the strategic vision for the creation of man and the entire universe (bearing in mind that man is the successor of God and the focal point of the universe) is exaltedness, the walk to God and greater proximity to the Almighty. This is evidenced by the Almighty's words: "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it" (Quran 84:6); and, "Then did you think that We created you uselessly and that to Us you would not be returned?" (Quran 23:115)

And as such, Allah, Almighty, provided us with the universe to support us. “He [also] subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all by His grace.” (Surat Al-Jathiya, 13), so He created everything on Earth as an adornment to drive us towards Him in this life: “We have indeed made whatever is on earth as an adornment for it, in order to test which of them is best in deeds.” (Surat Al-Kahf, 7). Then He commanded us to strive [to do well] in this world, “He is the One Who smoothed out the earth for you, so move about in its regions and eat from His provisions. And to Him is the resurrection [of all].” (Surat Al-Mulk, 15), in order for us to attain a real level of subservience to Him, and to obey Allah, Exalted is He. “I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.” (Surat Adh-Dhariyat, 56), in order for us to attain the highest degrees of perfection and proximity to Him, Exalted is He, and to deserve being His vice-regents. “Remember when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a successive [human] authority on earth.” (Surat Al-Baqarah, 30).



Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr, an Islamic scholar and philosopher, talked in his book about the succession of man and the testimony of the prophets*: "God Almighty has bestowed upon mankind the honor of vicegerency in Earth. Man became distinct from all other elements of the universe by virtue of being the vicegerent of God on Earth. Because of this vicegerency, he deserved to be the object of the angels' prostration and to be obeyed by all forces of the universe, visible or otherwise.

"Real growth, according to Islam, is for the vicegerent (the human) to embody the values he believes to be united in Allah Almighty, who gave him vicegerency and placed him as steward of the universe. The qualities and morals of God Almighty—such as justice, knowledge, compassion for the weak and vengeance on tyrants—are the standards of behavior in the society of the Caliphate and the objectives of the human Caliph. As it was said in the hadith: we must "adopt the morality of God". While these values are absolutely divine and without limit for God, man—the vicegerent—is a limited being. It is natural that the process of achieving these values is

embodied in continuous, absolute and active advancement towards God. Every time a human manages, through his actions, to come closer to achieving those ideals, and increasingly embodies God's justice, knowledge, ability, mercy, presence and His rejection of injustice and tyranny, it is recorded as a victory in the measure of the divine succession. As a result, the human draws closer on his long journey to God."

*** Source:**

Sayyed. Mohammad Baker Al Sadr, the succession of man and the testimony of the prophets, Dar Al Ma'aref Al Hakamya Beirut First Floor, 2014. ISBN 978-614-440-007-4





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 5

Take ten minutes to match up the following Quranic verses with the corresponding concepts.

Quranic verses:

1. "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me." (Quran 51:56)
2. "Allah has promised the believing men and believing women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment." (Quran 9:72)
3. "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth." (Quran 30:30)
4. "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it, And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness..." (Quran 91:7-8)
5. "Who perfected everything which He created and began the creation of man from clay. Then He made his posterity out of the extract of a liquid disdained. Then He proportioned him and breathed into him from His [created] soul and made for you hearing and vision and hearts; little are you grateful." (Quran 32:7-9)
6. "Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant." (Quran 33:72)
7. "And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful."" (Quran 2:31)
8. "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought." (Quran 45:13)
9. "And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. Those are the defiantly disobedient." (Quran 59:19)

10. "And it is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you. Indeed, your Lord is swift in penalty; but indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful." (Quran 6:165)

11. "[It will be said], "You were certainly in unmindfulness of this, and We have removed from you your cover, so your sight, this Day, is sharp."" (Quran 50:22)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ The mental aptitude bestowed on humans is the greatest gift that could be given to any creature
- ☐ Humans have an instinctive knowledge of God, an awareness of the Lord in the depths of their conscience, and knowledge of all doubts, diseases of arrogance and deviations that corrupt the human character.
- ☐ Man enjoys a moral conscience that recognizes the ugly and the beautiful by virtue of innate inspiration.

☐ When man departs from this world, many facts are revealed to him that were previously hidden

☐ Man has a free and independent identity and is the viceroy of God on Earth. He has a message and a responsibility, and it has been asked of him that he makes the Earth prosperous with his work and creativity.

☐ God created man to worship and obey Him.

☐ Earth and heaven were created for man.

☐ The human character contains a divine element in addition to the physical elements that are found in all living creatures, plants and animals.

☐ A successful person is one who fears God, even if they is the poorest and least fortunate in worldly terms.

☐ Man cannot find himself except by worshipping God, and if he forgets God, he forgets himself.

☐ Man is God's successor on Earth.

6

What does closeness to God mean?

“and the foremost **‘in faith’** will be the foremost **‘in Paradise’**. They are the ones nearest **‘to Allah’**”
(Surat Al-Waqi’ah, 10-11)





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اللّٰهُ سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى يَرِيدُ مَنَا أَرْ

■ What Does Closeness to God Mean?

13:59

What does closeness to God mean?

The true meaning: servitude and annihilation in God

Closeness to God is a real, existential closeness.



It is full awareness and engagement with our servitude to God in every aspect of our lives.

Servitude to God is complete liberation.



It is freedom from negative emotions and worldly shackles, and even from the slavery of the self.

"I have not seen anything except that I saw God before it, after it, with it, and in it."

A narrated saying attributed to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) describing the state of annihilation in God.



Practical application: turning wholly to God in the heart of life

The goal is not withdrawal in seclusion, but in the heart of life.



Seclusion

We should live this state while we practice our daily lives, with all their details and challenges.



The heart of life

Example: the sword strike of Imam Ali (peace be upon him) on the Day (Battle) of the Trench (Khandaq).



The Prophet (peace be upon him) regarded it as better than the deeds of his community, preferring striving and engagement over secluded worship.

Analogy: like a football (soccer) player in the World Cup final.



His dream of winning (closeness to God) is what drives him to play with enthusiasm (living life).



Strategic goals help us to realize our strategic vision; therefore, to determine our strategic goals in life, we need to look deeper at the divine strategic vision of being close to Allah.

In the lesson regarding the strategic thought behind creation, I mentioned that proximity to Allah is the strategic vision and the main

purpose behind creating the whole universe. However, what does it mean to attain proximity to Allah?

There is no doubt that being close to Allah refers to real, true, existential proximity and not to an illusion or idea of proximity. In other words, what matters is the proximity of our servitude to Allah or the extent of our perception and our interaction—consciously and subconsciously, in terms of behavior, knowledge and psychology—with our servitude to Allah. The ultimate goal is to reach a level of servitude to Allah and His love where we see nothing other than the presence of Allah in everything. Imam Ali (AS) said, “[I never saw anything without seeing Allah before, after, with, and in it.](#)” And the Almighty said, “[And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.](#)” (Quran 51:56)

Servitude to Allah means being liberated from all sort of restrictive chains and all sorts of darkness and negative feelings, such as frustration, fear, anxiety and weakness. It means breaking free of worship to ourselves such that nothing in the world, big or small,

affects us, and we remain in total submission to Allah alone.

Ponder upon this verse from the Quran: “Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve—their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darkness” (Quran 2:257). Allah is the light of the heavens and Earth.

This is what Imam Ali (AS) is talking about in the supplication of Munajat el Shabaniya: “O my God, grant me absolute devotion to You”. But beware: total devotion does not mean that we have to retreat from the world and live in seclusion. In fact, it can only happen while we are living among people and grappling with the contradictions and challenges that come with living life fully. We take on the challenges of living, yet we still keep our focus on Allah and on our servitude to Him, and we do this without allowing it to distract us from life and all that is in it. Life fuels devotion and devotion fuels life. They are balanced and mutually reinforcing, and as such should fill us with positivity and send us towards a divine set of



personal qualities that surpasses all imagination!

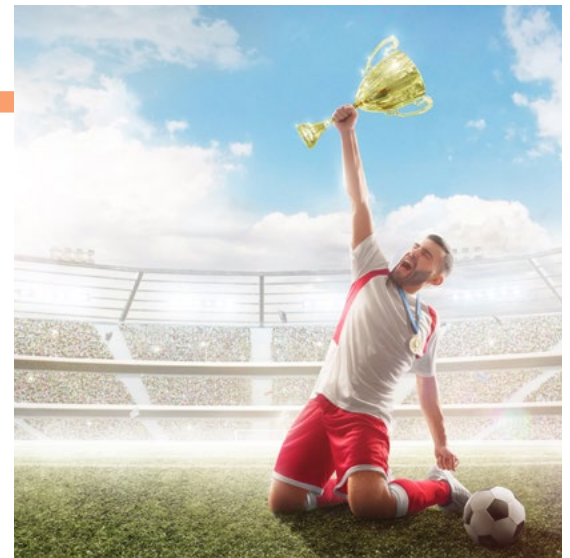
Let us contemplate what was reported by Mustadrak As-Saheehayn, Al-Khateeb Al-Baghdadi and by Al-Fakhr Al-Razi in his exegesis of the Messenger's words (PBUHF): "Verily, Ali ibn Abi Talib's (AS), challenge against Amr ibn Abd al-Wud on the Battle of the Trench is better than the actions of my nation until the Day of Judgement."

Consider that what Muhammad regarded to be greater than the works of the entire Islamic nation (Ummah) up to the Day of Judgment was not the prayer of Ali (AS) at midnight or his fasting during the day, but the blow from his sword to Amr ibn Abd al-Wud in the Battle of the Trench, which represented the exercise of jihad in the name of Allah!

And consider that which Allah regarded with pleasure from among the acts of Ali (AS) was his act of giving during the prayer, as expressed in the Quranic verse, "Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed—those who establish

prayer and give zakah, and they bow [in worship]." (Quran 5:55)

He did not prevent him from cutting off his Lord in prayer to realize that there was a poor person asking for charity, and he did not prevent him from giving charity to this person... This was great behavior, singled out by God in the Quran and linked to the meaning of guardianship, to following Him in our lives, and to the meaning of devotion to Allah Almighty.



The idea is to live in a state of full devotion, even as we eat, sleep, read, work, play, have fun with friends and engage in literally every aspect of our lives. We should immerse ourselves in the business of living, yet no aspect of it should prevent us from connecting with Allah, and vice versa. There is no opposition between the two states. They are not against each other; rather, they are entirely harmonious. Each is aligned with the other. In fact, your practice of living according to God's command is nothing but your bondage to God.

It is much like the feelings experienced by a soccer player during the World Cup finals: he enjoys the game and, at the same time, tries to score as many goals as possible. The image of the cup inspires him. It gives him the strength and focus to play at his absolute best. It is clear that there is no conflict between playing soccer, enjoying it as a game, and working hard to win the tournament cup.

The same logic applies when we devote ourselves fully to Allah and annihilate ourselves in Him such that we do not see

anything other than Him, and that all we aspire to do is to win His love and satisfaction. This provides us with unprecedented divine inspiration, enough to help us to live life in complete positivity and with absolute freedom from all forms of enslavement and injustice, so that we may engage in servitude to Him.

Allah wants us to enjoy the *mubah* ("permitted") pleasures of life: "Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?' Say, 'They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.'" (7:32). Not only that, but He urged us to seek it actively—"It is He who made the earth tame for you—so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision—and to Him is the resurrection" (67:15)—yet in moderation and positivity: "...and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess" (7:31). Our struggle against earthly pleasures embodies our evolution, connectedness with and proximity to Allah: "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet Him" (84:6). The

challenge is not to be captivated by or attached to our desires and pleasures in life.

It is not just life that Allah wants us to enjoy without being incarcerated by its pleasures, but our own selves. However, Allah wants us to love and like ourselves, He does not wish for us to become attached to ourselves. In

other words, Allah wants us to be annihilated in Him and to fully realize our servitude to Him: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (51:56)

How can we evolve to achieve this level of total servitude to Allah Almighty?

Our proximity to Allah is the product of two different, but well-connected elements. The first is the level of our servitude to Allah; the second is the level of our conscious and unconscious perception of this servitude, intellectually, emotionally and behaviorally.

We can think about it in the following manner: if your real servitude to Allah holds a weight of a thousand, and your capacity to feel and perceive it is 60%, then the total perception of your obedience to Allah is 600.



What do we mean when we talk about our “level of servitude to Allah”?

The First Aspect: Our Servitude to Allah:

Servitude to Allah is absolute and equal to our existence in every aspect. Servitude to Allah is the same as the existence that is emanated from Allah, and hence our servitude and devotion to Allah is greater and more intense than that of a jellyfish, for example, or any other creature. The closer our existence comes to perfection, the greater the number of positive attributes we gain (like knowledge, wisdom, and will). the more we demonstrate our capabilities and God-given powers, so the more manifestations we are able to show of our servitude to Allah, even if we do not realize this Imam al-Sadiq (AS): “Servitude is a jewel with the essence of the godhead.”.

Hence, if a person works to develop their talents and abilities and to increase their noble qualities—including generosity,

courage, wisdom, sense of self, determination, and so on - their level of bondage to God will increase by the same amount. By the same token, if a person loses their talents and abilities; if they do not work on their knowledge, instinct, courage, and sense of self, they will find themselves further away from Allah Almighty “[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed” (Quran 67:2).

The Second Element: Our Perception of our Servitude to Allah

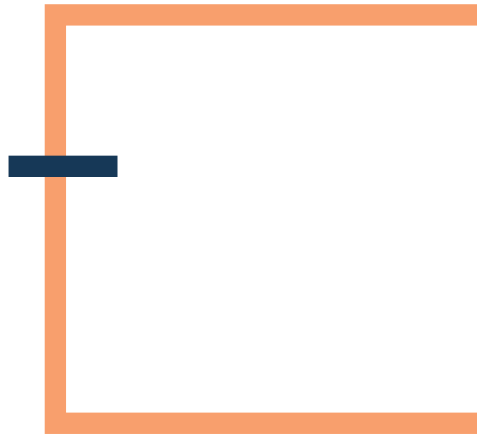
The second element, our perception of our servitude to Allah (which is one of the most important faculties and existential attributes of humankind), is dependent on how much we practice it in life (through submitting to Allah’s commands and doctrines) and how positively we interact with it.

In the Hadith Qudsi, the Almighty says: “None of my servants attains a proximity that is more beloved to Me than by doing the obligations I placed upon them. Then, they

become even closer by doing the recommended acts, until I love them. If I love my servant, I become their hearing, their vision, their tongue and their hand, which they use to attack. [At that point], if they pray to me, I respond to their prayer and if they ask something of me, I give it to them.”

Realizing these two elements is the goal we must strive for to achieve success, transcendence and happiness—not only in this life but in all the other realms of existence too.

Throughout the rest of the book, we will discuss these two goals. We will learn how to achieve them not only in a way that accords with the busy day-to-day life of the toiling individual, but also in a way that enables us to achieve happiness and tranquility of the self.



The two pillars of divine closeness

The essence of servitude (worship)

From Imam al-Şādiq (peace be upon him):

“Servitude is a jewel whose inner reality is lordship.”

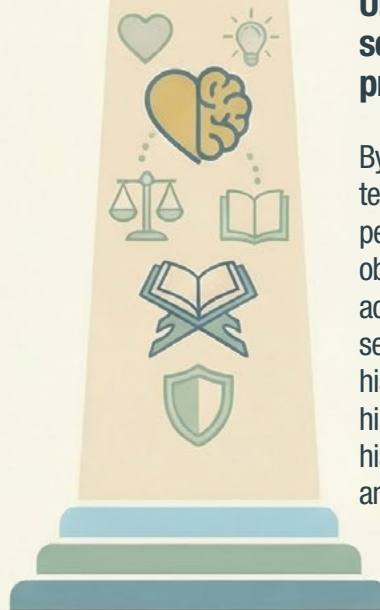
The first pillar: Honoring/Exalting self-discipline in servitude.

The more you develop your abilities and acquire noble qualities—such as knowledge, wisdom, and courage—the stronger and more complete your servitude to God becomes.



The second pillar: Understanding servitude and practicing it.

By submitting to God's teachings and performing the obligatory and voluntary acts of worship, a servant draws near to his Lord until God loves him—then He becomes his hearing, his sight, and his hand.





Essay Activity (External)

Write a research paper (between 500 and 1000 words) about the strategic goal of a person's life in other schools of thought, compared to the Islamic school of thought.





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 6

1.

Take 5 minutes to find a verse in the Quran that indicates clearly that the purpose of God’s creation of man is to return to God.
2.

Take 5 minutes to go through the lesson and find the 2 verses that show that Islam seeks to liberate humankind and raise it up.

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7

Cosmic Laws and Rules

“Are they awaiting anything but the fate of those
‘destroyed’ before? You will find no change in the way
of Allah, nor will you find it diverted ‘to someone
else’.” (Surat Fater, 43)

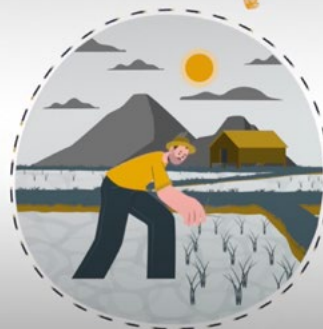
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■ Cosmic Laws and Rules

11:51

Cosmic laws: How does God govern the universe?

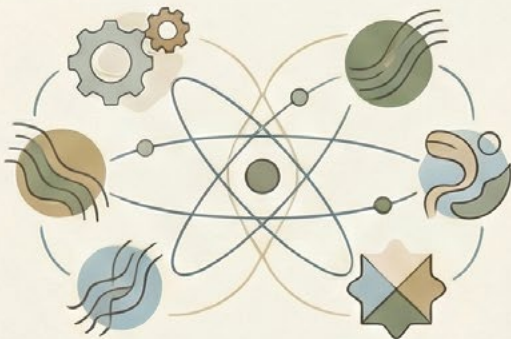
Clarifying the Islamic concept of cosmic laws: the universe operates according to fixed divine laws and the principle of cause and effect.

The principle of divine laws (Sunan).

Say: You will never find any change in God's way.

The universe moves according to fixed laws that do not change or fail.

Laws are the outcome of the interaction of the attributes of existing beings.



These laws are not independent entities; rather, they reflect how beings interact with one another.

The mechanism of creation and existence.

The universe was created by a single, simple divine will.



Every new realm is significantly more advanced than its predecessor, and our sense of happiness or misery within it multiplies accordingly.

The law of causality determines the characteristics of creatures.



Every creature has a cause that brought it into being and determined its traits through the very act of its creation.

Human characteristics are an inevitable result of their causes.



Height, intelligence, and skin color result from the union of a specific sperm and a specific egg.



Our succession on earth and our servitude to God through toil in this world is our path towards God and our means of achieving closer proximity to Him. However, what are the laws that govern this process? Are there laws already in existence, and if so, where did they come from? Who developed and defined them? This is what we will explore in this and the following sections.

Why was one human created black and another white? Why one human was created beautiful and intelligent, while another is deformed and limited in intellect? Why did God create diseases and demons? Why did God create us in this world, through the world of the womb, and not directly in heaven?

The univers—and everything in it—moves according to specific and unfailing universal laws, such as gravity and the law of cause and effect.

[“Then do they await except the way of the former peoples? But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration.” \(Quran 35:43\)](#)

It is through these laws that differences among creation arise, and they cause the way all beings exist and the characteristics they hold. These laws control the flow of everything, including our efforts in this world and our march towards Allah.

Allah, Almighty, has called upon us to discover these laws so that we may use them in the service of human development.

“He is the One Who smoothed out the earth for you, so move about in its regions and eat from His provisions. And to Him is the resurrection of all.” (Surat Al-Mulk, 15)

However, these laws and rules do not exist of their own accord in the real world. They arise from elsewhere, and their existence is only a reflection of the interaction between the qualities and capabilities of the various objects in the universe.

All objects—such as planets, animals, sea organisms, humans and even angels and demons—interact with each other according to their own qualities and capabilities. This

interaction produces the laws that govern the universe.

However, the qualities and capabilities that these objects possess are just aspects of their existence, for our existence is nothing but the sum of our qualities and capabilities. Whatever the expressions on your face, it remains the same face. The expressions are only qualities of the face; they are not separate from it. Likewise, the body is nothing more than its extent, size and mass.

From where did our existence, with the characteristics we hold, come from? Did Allah, Exalted is He, create every being in existence on its own and decide the exact characteristics every being holds during its creation?

God did not create each being independently of all other beings; rather, the entire universe, with all its various components and creatures, was made by a single divine will called “emanationism” in a continuous and vast outpouring of creation. As for beings, they were formed by the Law of Causality. “Surely, We have created everything in measure. Our

commandment is but one word, as the twinkling of an eye.” (Quran 54:49-50)

Everything was created with its different characteristics, in accordance to these high-level laws. “Indeed, We have created everything, perfectly preordained.” (Surat Al-Qamar, 49)

Accordingly, the existence of any human being, including his qualities and specific capabilities such as height, intelligence, strength, skin color, honesty, fairness, cooperativeness, determination, imagination, ambition, courage, and caring, is a natural and inevitable result of the union of a specific sperm—from among the billions of potential sperm from the father—with the ovule in his mother's womb, resulting in a unique combination of genes and genetic qualities.

Had another sperm merged with the ovule, or had the ovary produced a different ovule, then the human that came into existence would not be the same person, but another one, with different qualities and capabilities.

So, every creature has different circumstances that led to its existence, and these circumstances are what determine its qualities and capabilities as part of the creation process.

Does this mean that the universe is acting independently, according to its own laws, without the need for its creator?

No. God Almighty says: “O men, you are the ones that have the need of God; He is the All-sufficient, the All-laudable.” (Quran 35: 15) The universe, even with all that it contains, is fundamentally poor in the presence of God Almighty. God's dispersion of existence to the universe is a continuous and uninterrupted flow, like the sun's dispersion of light. That is why God describes Himself as light in the verse, “God is the Light of the heavens and the earth” (Quran 24:35)

When considering cause and effect, the direct causes that lead to things existing do not have an inherent quality of existence—one that enables them to bestow existence on other things. Only God, whose existence is necessary and inherent, emanates existence onto everything else. The so-called “causes” are no more than conditions and prerequisites; through their motion and interaction, God disperses existence to their effects. These effects can be thought of as having received their existence, capacities, and characteristics via their direct causes.

With this understanding, it becomes clear why one human is created black, another white; why one is created beautiful and intelligent, another deformed, and lacking in intellect. Why did God create diseases and monsters? Why did God create us in this world, through the world of the womb, and not directly in heaven?

The reason that God Almighty emanated a simple and constant flow of existence upon all that can exist is that God is generous and giving, and His existence is good in and of

itself. Every being shares in this goodness according to its capacities and capabilities, which have been earned because of the interaction of things in existence based on the system of “cause” and “effect”.

The Almighty expresses this by saying: “Say, “Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing.” He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity.” (Quran 13:16-17) This can be compared to the way that rainwater is abundant, but valleys can only absorb rainwater up to their capacity. Often it is the case that due to their physical limitations, they cannot absorb all of the rain. As such, God’s emanation of existence and creation is limitless, but creations take from it according to their capacity, which is the direct cause of their creation.

Cosmic laws and universal patterns

The Islamic concept views universal patterns as fixed laws that govern the universe, arising from the interaction of created beings.



Existing beings generate cosmic motion.

Every being is a source of motion according to the system of cause and effect (cause and result).

"You will never find any change in God's way (law). And you will never find any alteration in God's way (law)."

Core principle: God's laws in the universe are fixed and absolute; they do not change or shift.

Cosmic motion is governed by laws.

Everything in the universe—from the smallest atom to the largest galaxy—proceeds according to these fixed patterns.

Laws arise from the interaction of attributes.

Universal patterns are the result of the interaction of the characteristics and attributes of different beings with one another.

However, doesn't that lead to the existence of evil?

Actually, evil does not exist in the universe, because how can there be something in existence that does not come from Allah, Exalted is He, who is Absolute Goodness, Perfection and Beauty? Allah lacks nothing and not even a speck of evil exists within Him.

The issue is that we always view issues from a very limited angle, which is the angle of our egoism and how much a certain thing brings us joy or pain in this world, even if it is limited in scope and time. That is why many children consider school to be something evil and eating many sweets is something good, in their point of view.

Isn't death generally considered an absolute evil in human culture? This is despite it being good, above any other good state, because it is through death that humans reach a higher and more superior state – thousands of times so – like when they are born in this world? Yes,

it is a great act of goodness, since it is our way to ascend to Allah and to humanity's natural happiness.

If these laws never fail, then why do we pray to God?

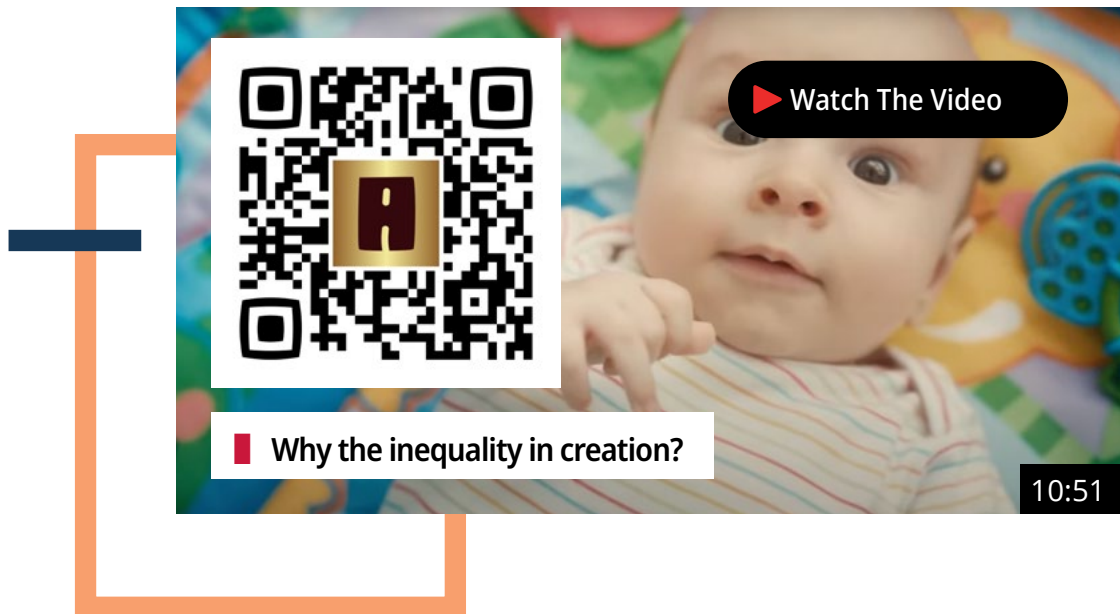
Laws are but the product of the qualities and capabilities of creations interacting with one another. All creations interact, influence one another, and are affected by one another according to their qualities and capabilities. A toddler may not be able to lift a 10 kg weight off the ground, but an adult can do so with ease. In the same way, we as humans cannot fly in the air, while birds can.

Therefore, the capacity of each being to affect the universe is subject to that being's inherent abilities and qualities. Since the power of God and His qualities are unlimited and absolute, this gives God absolute influence over the universe. **"His command, when He desires a thing, is to say to it 'Be,' and it is."** (Quran

36:82) This is what makes our prayers to God Almighty worthwhile.

Not forgetting, of course, that supplication to God is pleasing to Him; he invites us urgently, “Your Lord has said, ‘Call upon Me, and I will answer you.’” (Quran 40:60). It is not because he needs our prayers—for He is absolute and has no needs—but because our prayers to

God establish our state of servitude to Him, the second element in the equation of the proximity of Allah. “And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided..” (Quran 2:186)



God and the Universe

Answers to Key Questions

Clarifying the relationship between God and the universe and its laws, and answering fundamental questions about the ongoing need for the Creator, the concept of evil, and the value of supplication from a faith-based perspective.

Is the universe independent of God through its laws?

The universe is in constant need of its Creator.

O people, you are those in need of God, while God is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy. - (Surah Fatir, verse 15)

Natural laws are not a source of existence.

They only make things capable of receiving and continuing the ongoing divine effusion.

Does the existence of evil conflict with the existence of a good Creator?

There is no absolute evil in the universe

The outpouring of existence from God is continuous—like light from the sun—and not a one-time event that happened and ended.



What we see as bad may be good from a broader perspective.

Like death, which we consider evil, while in reality it is an ascent to a better stage of existence.



Evil is a perception that results from our limited and narrow human viewpoint.

And your Lord said, "Call upon Me; I will respond to you."

(Surah Ghafir, verse 60)

Supplication strengthens servitude and draws us closer to God.

It is a direct relationship with the Creator that elevates the level of our existence and our happiness.

Why do we pray to God if the laws are constant?

God's power is absolute and surpasses laws.

Our ability to influence is limited, but God's power has no limits, and supplication is a means of seeking His intervention.





Optional Reading

Part from “The Journey of a Toiler” (Novel)

That evening, the lecture hall looked like a busy market. Everyone had made sure to attend and see this long-awaited debate. Some of them patted my shoulder on their way to their seats and uttered words of encouragement and support. I was too preoccupied to pay attention to that. My forehead sweated and my hands shook. It was supposed to be a simple discussion between two groups, but the issue had become a personal conflict between Amer. and me my team members gathered around me.

The supervisor asked Amer to start his motion and then for me to give my reply. I asked the supervisor if I could have longer to respond,



as the issue I was to explain was intricate and required some introduction. He approved no longer than fifteen minutes.

- "I used to feel that this was a very complex issue indeed," I said, to break the ice "But then, when I realized the answer, I found it easy and clear. I want to start by asking Amer a question, if I may."
- * "Go ahead," the supervisor, said, and Amer approved too.
- "Thank you. You wonder why Allah gave you the facial features you have right now, don't you?"
- "You could say that as an example, yes."
- "If your father took you to a plastic surgeon and had you change the way you look, would you still wonder why Allah gave you this new look?"
- "No, but then I would ask my father and the surgeon why they gave me that new look."

- "Exactly!" My agreement surprised Amer. He had expected a different answer.

- * "Are you implying that we, humans, created these evils, not Allah? Because then I would ask why Allah created evils in the first place."
- "Don't rush me. Let me finish my answer, and then you can object as you like," I said, with all the confidence I could muster. "I need to clarify two issues before I give the answer. First, whatever potential and attributes we may have - like intelligence, strength, height, and skin color - are the same as our existence. They are nothing outside our own existence. Our existence is nothing but the sum of our potential and attributes. The same is true for everything else, like the rocks, oceans, stars, jellyfish and all other creatures. Their existence is the sum of their potential and attributes. Your facial features, for example, are nothing but the limits and attributes of the face. The body is nothing the spatial extension, volume, mass and all the other physical attributes it has."

Does anyone disagree so far?" I looked around the audience, but no one spoke a word. What I was saying seemed so true. The supervisor gestured to me to go on.

- "The attributes and potential of each being in this universe interacts with the attributes and potential of all the other beings around it, and this makes up the motion of the universe. Take, for example, the interaction of the nature of tissue paper with the nature of liquid water. The tissue paper gets wet if falls into the water. Another example is our human physical nature, which interacts with the nature of Earth. We can walk, run, and jump, but we can't fly like birds or breathe in water like fish or crawl like reptiles, because we have different natures."
- * "Mohammed." The supervisor interrupted me. "Would you explain this issue further for the audience?"
- "Sure, professor. What I am saying is that all creatures and beings with their vast diversity, including humans, animals, and

even angels and demons, interact with each other by means of whatever attributes and potential they have. This mutual interaction between things forms the natural laws that govern the universe, like gravity, sea tides, cause and effect and all the other laws of physics. This leads us to deduce that all these laws, despite governing and outlining the motion of existence, are not something external or independent of the existence of things. The laws and the things are the same. For example, if a piece of rock fell on an egg, it would break it. If it did not, there must be something protected the eggshell; otherwise, the rock would not be a rock and the eggshell would not be an eggshell.

- "This is the basis upon which all sciences are founded, and it is the foundation for all the systems in existence. No one would ever believe that pouring water on the ground could cause a nuclear explosion. If the USA claimed that it had never bombed Hiroshima, but instead had thrown a bouquet of flowers that caused the explosion, we would be laughing, wouldn't we?

- “These laws are what the Quran refers to collectively as ‘Sunnat Allah’ [the way of Allah], and this means that they cannot ever vary. “But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration.”
- * “Excellent point. Go on,” the supervisor said.
- “The second issue I want to introduce is that Allah did not create each being with a separate will. He did not create my father with a will that is different from the will created in me or in any other thing. Everything in this universe is created with one simple [non-compound] will, a continuous flow of existence as described by the Quran: “Indeed, all things We created with predestination (49) And Our command is but one, like a glance of the eye.” All the creatures of the Earth were created and formed according to the laws governing the universe, and work by cause and effect.
- “The point in the introduction is a natural result of the previous one”. According to the law of cause and effect, my being, with all my attributes and potential, is a natural and inevitable result of the fertilization of the ovum in my mother’s womb with one particular sperm among billions of sperm in my father with the subsequent inheritance of specific features.
- “If it was another sperm that had fertilized the ovum, or if it was another ovum that was fertilized, then it wouldn’t have been me who came out, it would have been someone else. This logic applies to all other creatures and things as well. Every creature and every being is the result of a particular set of causes that created them in that particular way and thereby determined their characteristics and potential.”
- * “Are you implying that Allah created the universe and that it is now acting alone on the basis of these natural laws, with no interference from Allah?” Amer asked.

- “Of course not. The whole universe is perpetually and innately dependent in its existence on the independent existence of Allah. Allah’s bestowal of existence on the universe is a perpetual one, much like the light emitted by the sun to the Earth. This makes things visible. Allah describes Himself as The Light: “Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.”
- * “So, in effect, did Allah create me with my attributes and potential, or did my parents create me?” asked Amer.
- “Both answers are true. Allah created you and your parents created you. Let me ask you: Who grew the mango trees in the backyard of your home?”
- “My father did.”
- But Allah says: “And have you seen that [seed] which you sow? (63) Is it you who makes it grow, or are We the grower?” Allah attributes growing plants to Himself.

Let me clarify that part. When we make a fire, we also get intense heat. When we put an egg over the fire, it is cooked. So what cooked the egg? Was it the fire or the heat?”

- I felt very comfortable when I heard many voices amongst the audience saying, “Both.”
- “Well then. Back to the Amer’s question: Why is one person smarter or stronger or richer than another is? Why were germs and monsters created? The answer is that Allah bestowed one simple perpetual existence on all that could be, even if it was an incomplete being. He did not withhold existence on anything that could be because He is gracious and giving. Existence is in itself good, and everything supplements this good with as much potential as it has because of the interaction of everything with everything else under the system of cause and effect.

- “Allah gives an analogy for this system: “Say, Allah is the Creator of all things, and He is the One, the Prevailing (16). He sends down from the sky, rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity.” Valleys can only accommodate as much as their size can hold, not as much as they are offered by rain; and likewise, everything receives as much existence as it can accommodate, not as much as Allah does offer it. The reason for this variation is the direct causes that precede its creation.
- “This follows the analogy with which I began my talk, when I asked you about the new looks you would be given by a plastic surgeon. You said you would not blame Allah because the surgeon and your father would be the reason for the change in your facial features, not Allah. By the same token, your other attributes are the natural outcome of the genes you inherited from your parents, and the same is true for everything happening in the universe, which is a natural result of the motion and interaction of things with each other.”
- I paused for few moments to allow it to sink in, then to drive the point home, I asked the audience, “Let me ask you: We all find some sort of deficiency in ourselves, but would you rather not be at all? Do you wish that Allah had never created you? Or do you feel happy you exist and that Allah did not deny you existence just because you are a few things short of perfect?” I was so touched by my own idea, and was feeling so grateful for Allah. The supervisor clapped his hands intently, followed by the other students and, surprisingly, Amer himself.
- * “I’ve asked many people about this dilemma, but I never got such an answer before,” Amer said, “But I have two more questions.”
- “Okay.”
- * “The first question: If Allah bestowed one simple and perpetual, existence and if every being receives this bestowal to the extent that it can according to the causes that created it, then there must be one

being that received its existence directly from Allah and did not have any prior causes for it other than Allah. Right?" asked Amer.

- "That's right. This first affected being - or the first emanation of Allah, as some call it - has all the attributes of perfection, strength and intensity in existence that any creature could ever have, including will and cognition. All other creatures and beings came from this first emanated creature under consideration of the hierarchy of the system of cause and effect, as I clarified previously."
- "To be honest, this notion is novel to me, and it will take me some time to fully absorb it. Anyhow, let me get to the second question - and correct me if I am wrong. What you are saying is that the universe is operating according to systems and rules that are determined by the interaction of existent things with each other, and that these interactions are governed by the things' attributes and potentials, which in turn are nothing

but their very existence, and nothing external to it, right?"

- * "That pretty much sums it up, thank you."
- * "You said that these rules governing the universe are 'Sunnat Allah', and cannot lag or vary no matter what happens. The egg would not be an egg if it did not break when a rock fell on it, and the water would not be water if it caused a nuclear explosion. Is that right?"
- "Yes."
- * "My question, then, is: What is prayer for? Why do we ask Allah to do certain things for us, if everything in existence is governed by the interactions of things?" asked Amer.

I took few moments to think. At that moment, I remembered how Allah was always supporting and caring for me in every moment of my life, even when I did not realize it or thought that He had let me down. A chill went through my body.

- “If you found something burning beside your little brother’s bed when he was asleep, what would you do?”
- * “I would wake him up and try to put it out.”
- “How would you put it out?”
- * “Using a fire extinguisher, of course.”
- “Let’s say you could put it out by blowing on it only once; would you wake up your brother, or just put it out?”
- * “What’s your point?”
- “Bear with me. If you had the powers of Superman, would blowing the fire out be violating natural laws?”
- * “No, it would be in accordance with natural laws.”
- “In other words, deciding what is in violation of laws of nature and what is not

depends on the available resources and on their attributes and potential, right?”

* “I guess that is right.”

- “You put out the fire using an extinguisher. Your little brother could not do that, because he is too small to carry or operate the cylinder, but Superman wouldn’t even need the extinguisher, because he could just blow strong wind on the flame and put it out. This is because he is strong and has higher powers. Now, would Allah, the Omnipotent, not be able to put out the fire as well?”

Amer did not speak. I continued.

- “Yes, He could, and He wouldn’t need an extinguisher or even to blow wind. The Quran says, “His command is only when He intends a thing that He says to it, “Be,” and it is.” His intervention would not be violating any laws of nature at all. We pray to Him and ask Him things because He is

the Omnipotent and is merciful to us. Everything, including us, is His and goes by His command. He commanded us to pray and ask, and He guaranteed that the answer would come in one way or another. The Quran says: *“Call upon Me; I will respond to you.”*

- * “That is wonderful.” Amer clapped his hands and seemed very satisfied. I was surprised by his reaction. I thought he would keep arguing and find something to prolong the discussion, but it seems I had misjudged him.
- * “Thank, you Amer. I ask you, the supervisor, and the audience to allow me a few more minutes to share my experience in this regard.”

I took a few moments to gather my ideas and memories. When I spoke, my voice was calm and deep, but also conveyed an obvious

conviction.

- “We all have badly days and bad periods from time to time, but I may have had the worst among you. For my whole life, my family has been poor. My father passed away when I was in high school, a critical period of my life. I was very attached to him, and this caused me to fail to get into university. Right now, I am juggling several responsibilities at home, in my job and here in college. I do not have enough time to sleep. You might assume that I am the most miserable among you, but the truth is that I am the happiest. I discovered that all the difficulties I had been for my good. I suffered bad depression for a full year after the death of my father, but at the same time, it opened my heart and soul to true love - Allah's love. If it had not been for my father's death and its consequences, I would still be that silly little boy. My

failure to get into university opened up new horizons for me. The pressures I have from my various responsibilities have strengthened my will and perseverance. They have sharpened my mind and made me discover a lot about myself that I would not have otherwise. In summary, what I want to say is if we look at the big picture, these apparent evils do us good, and Allah witnesses our endurance and cares for us. In fact, that is why he tests us from time to time with these hardships. The Quran says: “*And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, (155) Who, when disaster strikes them, say, 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return (166) Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided.'*”

- There is no such thing as absolute evil in existence. How could there be when the

only source of existence is Allah, who is nothing but absolute good, perfection and beauty, and has no deficit or evil in Him? The problem is that we look at things from a narrow and limited perspective defined by our egos and by how much pleasure we get from things, even if that pleasure is momentary. Take school as an example; kids hate it, as Amer hated the Taekwondo classes. Death represents an absolute evil in general human culture, but in reality, it is an unparalleled good because it allows humans to ascend to a greater phase of life. It is like the day of birth to another world. Yes, it is good and wonderful for the fact that it is ascension to Allah and eternal happiness. My father died and we felt sad for his parting, and that was out of our belief that an evil thing had happened to him. In reality, however, it was the best thing that had ever happened to him.”

I stopped talking, and a heavy silence set in over the hall. Everyone was touched, perhaps

by the mention of death, the issue that we all avoid talking about as if from fear of making it a reality. On the other hand, perhaps I had presented my idea too vehemently. The supervisor was the first to clap, followed by all the others.

* “That is great, Mohammed. Nice presentation and an optimistic perspective on life. We need to learn to think like you.”

He then asked the audience if they had any question, but there were none.





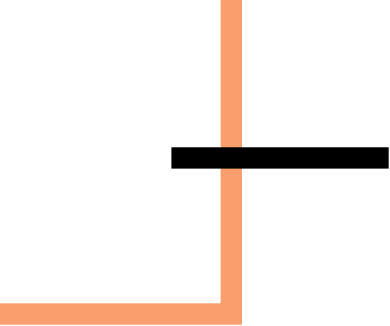
Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 7

Spend ten minutes determining which sentences from the following list are incorrect, and which are correct:

- ☐ God's dispersion of existence to the universe is a continuous and uninterrupted flow
- ☐ The existence of any human being, including the qualities and specific capabilities that he possesses, is a natural and inevitable result of the union of a specific sperm from among billions of potential sperm from the father, to the ovule in his mother's womb, including genes and specific genetic qualities.
- ☐ Cosmic laws and rules exist independently in the real world. They exist due to the reflection of the interaction of the qualities and capabilities of the various objects in the universe
- ☐ Supplication to God is pleasing to the Almighty. It is not his need for our prayers, for He is the absolute and has no needs, but because our prayers to God establish our state of servitude to Him
- ☐ All objects like planets, animals, sea organisms, humans and even angels and demons interact with each other according to their own qualities and capabilities. This interaction produces the laws that govern the universe
- ☐ Allah creates all beings through his ability. He emanates life into each being after selecting through his wisdom the optimal characteristics of each individual being.

- ☐ The qualities and capabilities objects possess is the same as their existence, for our existence is nothing but the sum of our qualities and capabilities.
- ☐ Even if another sperm merged with the ovule, or had the ovary produced a different ovule, then the human that came into existence would be the same person, but with different qualities and capabilities
- ☐ The universe - with all its beings - is moving according to specific and unfailing universal laws
- ☐ God has not created each being in a will independent of other creatures. Rather, the entire universe, with all its components and creatures, was created by a single divine will, a concept referred to as "emanationism"
- ☐ The universe acts independently according to its laws, without the need for its creator
- ☐ The direct causes that lead to things existing do not have an inherent quality of existence that enables them to bestow existence on other things
- ☐ The so-called "causes" are no more than conditions and prerequisites through whose motion and interaction God disperses existence to their effects. These effects can be thought of as having received their existence, capacities, and characteristics via their direct causes



“Surely to Allah we belong and to Him we will ^١all^٢ return.” (Surat Al-Baqarah, 156)

8

Life's Journey

The Journey of Life: Human's Voyage to Allah

4. The Realm of the Hereafter

The eternal abode where the sense of happiness or misery multiplies infinitely.

3. The Realm of Barzakh (Isthmus)

Where the soul integrates and develops in preparation for the permanent abode.

2. The Realm of the World

The station of action and will; the stage that shapes the eternal destiny of the human.

1. The Realm of the Womb

Where the initial physical development of the human is completed.

Resurrection

Death

Birth

The Essence of the Journey

Immense Evolution

Every new realm is significantly more advanced than its predecessor, and our sense of happiness or misery within it multiplies accordingly.



The World is the Key

Happiness in the Hereafter is linked to proximity to Allah, which we determine through our actions and decisions in this world.





Our journey towards God begins with our creation, and continues until we encounter Him. “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it.” (Quran 84:6). This is not a chaotic journey but one that runs in accordance with strict and unwavering universal laws. Yet we are able to control the journey because of the knowledge and ability we gain and the extent to which we strive to reach Him, the Almighty. In this section, we will address the general framework of man's journey to God Almighty.

A person does not move from one world to the next until he has completed his development and can make the transition. “We created man of an extraction of clay, then We set him, a drop,

in a receptacle secure, then we created of the drop a clot, then We created of the clot a tissue, then We created of the tissue bones, then We garmented the bones in flesh; thereafter We produced him as another creature. So blessed be God, the fairest of creators! Then after that you shall surely die, then on the day of Resurrection you shall surely be raised up.” (Quran 23:12-16)

Only once the sperm has fertilized the ovule, can it move to the womb and only through the process of pregnancy—that is, completing its development and becoming human—can it transition to the world through birth?

Hence, when the human completes his growth in this world and his soul reaches the stage of detachment, it will depart to the purgatory realm through the process of death. There, it will continue to develop along with other souls until the day arrives when it is ready to move into the Hereafter—its permanent home. To this end, it transitions through the process of “resurrection” during which it matures towards completeness, achieve glory, and becomes closer to God the Almighty.

From a mathematical perspective, the first three worlds (the womb, this world and the purgatory realm) are zero in comparison with the Hereafter, which has no end. "And this worldly life is not but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter - that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew." (Quran 29:64).

But what are the next two worlds like?

We can describe the worlds of purgatory and the Hereafter, but we cannot know their realities. "And produce you in a form you know not" (Quran 56:61).

To imagine the difference between these two worlds and the earthly world, you might compare yourself as a sperm to yourself as a complete human being. Then, imagine that you will be subject to the same degree of development again once you reach the purgatory realm!

Try to compare the world of semen or the womb with the earthly world: a vast universe that contains millions of galaxies, among which the Milky Way is one of the smallest, and in which the solar system is located, with all the planets and moons residing in the tip of its tail.

Then imagine the purgatory realm, which is as far removed from the earthly world as the



earthly world is from the world of the womb. Then imagine the world of the Hereafter, which is even further removed from the purgatory realm!

This is just an attempt to describe the leaps in magnitude from one world to the next, but the truth is much more expansive than this. In spite of the earthly world's high level of development in comparison with the world of semen, and in spite of our high level of development in comparison with the sperm, we are still comprised of the same physical material, which is captive to time and space. In contrast, our souls and the coming worlds are not comprised of this physical material and are not prisoners of time and space!

The evolution of our sense of happiness and misery

Our sense of pleasure and pain evolves to the same degree by which we evolve and the world of the purgatory realm (in the grave)

evolves when compared with the earthly world! It becomes part of the reality of our existence. We can transform into happiness, heaven, and contentment themselves. On the other hand, we can also transform into misery and hell themselves, just as coal transforms into embers!

Again, the same degree of evolution that we see from the world of Purgatory to the Hereafter applies for the development of our sense of pleasure and happiness and the development of our sense of pain, suffering and misery.

For most people, happiness in the earthly world depends on having external things like money, children and power. However, in the following two worlds, happiness relates completely to the level of integration of our existence and our spiritual attributes (the level of our proximity to God!)

We were not able to exert any influence on the shape our existence took as we came into the earthly world. However, it is in this world that God ordained us to reside in order to exercise our will and decision-making abilities and to develop the existence and character with which we will move to the next two worlds. This, in turn, will determine the extent of our feelings of happiness or, conversely, our feelings of suffering and misery in the next two worlds. The Almighty said: *"So as for he who transgressed and preferred the life of the world, then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge. But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge."* (Quran 79:37-41)



Optional Reading

If the lifetime of man in the earthly world of al-Dunya - even if he lives for hundreds of years – is compared to his real lifetime, which extends to infinity, then this earthly lifetime equals zero, because, any number, no matter how significant, is zero in relation to infinity.

In addition, the size of any pleasure or happiness he experiences in this world - no matter how great – is almost zero compared to the joy and happiness of paradise, which has almost no limit, and which exceeds the pleasure and happiness of the earthly world trillions of times over!

In a similar vein, the magnitude of any torment and misery in this world - no matter its magnitude – is almost zero compared to the torment of hell.

With this in mind, a person would be foolish to land themselves in infinite hell and never-ending torture – and thus to deprive themselves of infinite pleasure and endless gratification – for the sake of enjoying instant gratification or avoiding a momentary pain in the world of al-Dunya, both of which would be equal to zero.





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 8

1. Take ten minutes to find two Quranic verses indicating that man dies and is resurrected twice after their life in al-Dunya: once in al-Barzakh, and once in the Hereafter. You may use electronic devices to help you if wish.

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9

Recompense in the Hereafter

“Watch for the Day when every soul will be presented with whatever good it has done. And it will wish that its misdeeds were far off.” (Surat Aal Imran, 30)





▶ Watch The Video



■ Recompense in the Hereafter

كيف الجنة

14:02

Eschatological Recompense: How Our Deeds Shape Our Hereafter

According to the Islamic perspective, the Hereafter is not a separate realm in which punishments and rewards are arbitrarily imposed. Rather, it is a natural extension of our worldly life. Happiness and misery there are the direct result of the character we have built and the deeds we have performed, where our inner reality becomes manifest.

Section 1: The Embodiment of Deeds

Recompense is the very deed itself.

Our happiness and suffering in the Hereafter are the direct outcome of the actions we formed in this world.

The Example of the Fetus

“On the Day when every soul will find what it has done of good present.”
(Āl ‘Imrān 3:30)

A sound fetus

It does not suffer in the womb; it only experiences difficulty at birth if it is ill.

An ill fetus

It suffers at birth if it was already ill in the womb.

Section 2: The Fate of Souls at Death

The Believer

Like removing soiled clothes and replacing them with the finest garments.

“Peace be upon you; enter Paradise.”

The Disbeliever

Like removing fine garments and replacing them with the filthiest clothes.

“Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire.”

Death: A transition, not suffering in itself. The experience of death depends entirely on a person's condition and deeds in this world.

Section 3: Do All Disbelievers Enter the Fire?

Two Types of Disbelief

Disbelief of Rejection (Obstinate Denial)

Its outcome differs after the proof has been fully established.



Deserving of punishment.

Disbelief of Ignorance (the Uninformed / the Oppressed)

Its outcome differs after the proof has been established.



They fall under God's pardon and mercy and are among the saved.

We move on to the following two worlds based on how we shaped ourselves in the previous world, taking the qualities and characteristics we gained and leaving behind those we lost. How happy or unhappy we are in purgatory and the world of the Hereafter depends on how the existence we developed in this world interacts with the laws of those places. *“And they shall find all they wrought present, and thy Lord shall not wrong anyone.”* (Quran 18:49)

It could be compared to the scenario of a pregnant mother infected with AIDS (HIV). The infection passes to her fetus, but as long as it remains in the world of the womb, it is not harmed because it does not yet require an immune system. The suffering will begin when it comes into the earthly world and when it interacts with the world according to its laws and its creatures, which include germs and viruses. *“[It will be said], ‘You were certainly in unmindfulness of this, and We have removed from you your cover, so your sight, this Day, is sharp.’* (Quran 50: 22)

Sayyid Tabatabai says (1): “God has shown that what humans will be judged upon are

their actions in the earthly world themselves, according to their true reality, not as humans have assigned recompense for them. The deed is recorded by God by maintaining the “acting being” and then revealing the deed to it on the day the secrets are revealed.” Consider the following verses: *“The day every soul shall find what it has done of good brought forward, and what it has done of evil; it will wish if there were only a far space between it and that day.”* (Quran 3:30); and: *“Do not excuse yourselves today; you are only being recompensed for what you were doing.”* (Quran 66:7). The significance of the verses is apparent, and many other verses reiterate the same idea.

What about the severity of death?

Death is difficult for humans in general, as it transitions them to a world that is unknown to them, a world for which they are not psychologically prepared. However, humankind adjusts itself quickly to this

marvelous new purgatory realm. The life beyond death is not necessarily comprised of torment and misery; its experience is dependent upon a person's actions in the earthly world.

The Quran describes receiving the souls of believers, saying: "The ones whom the angels take in death, [being] good and pure; [the angels] will say, 'Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do.'" (Quran 16:32) And of the souls of unbelievers, it says: "And if you could but see when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieved... They are striking their faces and their backs and [saying], 'Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire.'" (Quran 8:50)

Furthermore, observe what Imam As-Sajjad (AS) had to say when asked about death: "For the believer, it means taking off their dirty, louse-infested clothes, removing their heavy shackles and chains, and enjoying the most luxurious clothes, the finest scents and the friendliest abodes. "For the infidels, it means giving up their luxurious, clothes, and friendly abodes and instead being subject to the worst

clothes, the most inhospitable abodes and the worst torment."

So, will non-believers go to hell?

The religion that was favored by God as a path for human beings towards Him the Almighty is the religion of Islam, the final of the heavenly religions to be revealed. The Almighty says: "And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." (Quran 3:85)

However, Mourtada Al Mathari says (2) that there is no doubt that there are two types of infidelity: apostasy for the sake of stubbornness and controversy, called the apostasy of ingratitude, and infidelity resulting from ignorance and lack of knowledge of the truth. For individuals belonging to the first category—that is, those who see clear evidence and proof of the truth but continue to object to and deny it—there is certain

scriptural and rational evidence that they are worthy of punishment.

As for the second type of infidelity, it is acknowledged that the ignorance and lack of knowledge that remain even after a human has endeavored to seek the truth are justification for God's pardon and mercy. If a human shows willingness to surrender to the truth but fails, for some reason, to be guided to the path of Islam, they are not to be held accountable. God will not punish them, and they will indeed receive salvation. The Almighty says: ["We never chastise until We send forth a Messenger..."](#) (Quran 17:15).

["Indeed, those whom the angels take \[in death\] while wronging themselves - \[the angels\] will say, 'In what \[condition\] were you?' They will say, 'We were oppressed in the land.' The angels will say, 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious\[enough\] for you to emigrate therein?'"](#) For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination. [97] - [Except for the oppressed among men, women and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they directed to a way -](#)

[\[98\]; For those it is expected that Allah will pardon them, and Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving."](#) (Quran 4)

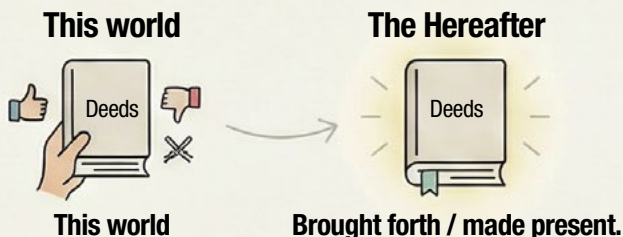
Sayyid Tabatabai says (1), in his interpretation of this verse, "Allah Almighty considers ignorance of religion and all resistance to the rituals of religion wrongful and not to be granted with divine pardon. "Then he excludes the oppressed and accepts their excuse of oppression... This applies also to those whose intellects did not move to the undisputable religious knowledge because it was hidden from them for some reason, so long as they would not be proud to succumb if it appeared to them."

"Such a vulnerable person is helpless and cannot be guided—not because he was forced to ignore the doctrine by being surrounded by the enemies of religion bearing the sword and the whip, but because he was oppressed by different factors which imposed a carelessness on him. He has no ability to control this carelessness and no way to deal with this ignorance."

Your deeds today... your reality tomorrow.

In the Hereafter, you are not judged for your deeds only; you will find them present and embodied, and they are what shape your happiness or your misery.

Your recompense is the deed itself.



The Exalted says:

On the Day every soul will find whatever good it has done brought forth, and whatever evil it has done—it will wish that there were a far distance between it and that evil.

Like a fetus in two worlds.



A person's situation is like that of a fetus with an immunodeficiency: it is not harmed in the womb, but it suffers when it is born into the germ-filled world of this life.

Likewise, our deeds do not show their true effect except in the Hereafter, with its different laws.

Death: a transition, not a torment.

For the believer



Like taking off dirty clothes and replacing them with the finest clothes.

For the disbeliever



Like taking off fine clothes and replacing them with the dirtiest and roughest clothes.

Two types of disbelief



Denial (disbelief of rejection)

(Stubbornness despite knowing the truth).
Deserving of punishment.



Disbelief due to ignorance.

(One who is not negligent—truth did not reach him). He falls within God's pardon and mercy.

What is heaven like?

When we think of heaven, we envision a peaceful life in large castles with gardens teeming with rivers of wine, milk, and honey, surrounded by houri and served by the eternal servants. This life resembles the lives of princes and caliphs, as depicted by historians. However, life in heaven has a unique characteristic: it is eternal and unlimited and there is no pain there.

Some people wonder: Isn't an eternity of calmness and boredom a scary proposition? Have we lived a challenging lifestyle, which is part of the training, legislative, and formative program that Allah exposed us to in this world in order to allow us to overcome our material limitations and experience spiritual and intellectual pleasures for us, and then have an eternity of a boring material life? Is this not futile?

So what is the benefit of strengthening our will, our knowledge and human skills in this world if they are going to be set aside in

heaven, and our reward is going to be an eternity of material benefits?

The previous description of heaven, as mentioned in the Quran, is only a part of what life in heaven is like. It just so happens that these are the characteristics that most people value. However, heaven contains all the pleasures and positive things you can imagine, and more. *“There they will have whatever they desire, and with us is ‘even’ more.”*, and in heaven, there is what no eye has even seen, nor any ear has ever heard and no human mind has ever imagined. *“No soul can imagine what delights are kept in store for them as a reward for what they used to do.”* (Surat Al-Sajdah: 17). As for the spiritual and intellectual



rewards, they are even more than what you can imagine: "...and—above all—the pleasure of Allah. That is 'truly' the ultimate triumph." (Surat At-Taubah, 72)

The worldly life with everything it contains and all the different activities that are possible here, is a joke when compared to life in heaven and what is possible there. This world is very limited in scope, and even then, most of the time, it is based on imagination and delusion. It resembles a virtual reality game, while life in heaven is true and real in every single one of its aspects, with no limitations. "This worldly life is no more than play and amusement. But the Hereafter is indeed the real life, if only they knew." (Surat Al-Ankabut, 64). You exist in this world to develop and exploit your human skills that are contained in your existence, so you can have an eternal life in heaven, with all the depth, diversity, and greatness that can be obtained there.

Life in heaven is not boring and calm, but rather, it is filled with motion, change and perfection in all its aspects, towards the Greatest Beloved Being, Exalted is He. That is

why the people who live their eternal lives in heaven, despite this eternal life "where they will be forever, never desiring anywhere else," (Surat Al-Kahf, 108), never desire anything better than heaven. It fulfills all their desires, according to their personalities and skills which, they built for themselves in this world and which change as they develop toward perfection in heaven. "There they will have whatever they desire, and with Us is 'even' more." (Surat Qaf, 35)

Sources:

- 1) Al Sayyed Al Tabtabai, Al-Mizan fi Tafsir al-Qur'an.
- 2) Al Sheikh Mourtada Al Mathari , God's Justice , Translated by Mouhammad Abed Al Mounhim Al Khakani, The House Of Islam , Beirut, 1997.

Paradise: Beyond Common Perceptions

The Common Perception: A luxurious material paradise



An eternal but boring life

Palaces, gardens, and rivers—yet a material life, static and repetitive, without change.



A troubling question:

Is spiritual growth in the Hereafter limited to eternal material enjoyment only?



The Qur'anic Reality: Ever-renewing bliss with no end



A realm beyond imagination

Where there is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no human heart has conceived.

“For them therein is whatever they desire, and with Us is even more.” (Qur'an)

A continuous divine bestowal that surpasses all desires and expectations.

An Evolving Life That Never Knows Boredom

Filled with movement, transformation, and continuous ascent in degrees of closeness to God.





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 9

Take 15 minutes to match the following Quranic verses with the appropriate paragraphs of the lesson:

Quranic verses:

1. "Except for the oppressed among men, women, and children who have no means of escape and are not guided to a way. For those, it is expected that Allah will pardon them, and Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving." Surah An-Nisā' 4:98–99
2. "And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers." Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:85
3. "And they will find what they did present before them, and your Lord does injustice to no one." Surah Al-Kahf 18:49
4. "And this worldly life is nothing but diversion and amusement. And indeed, the home of the Hereafter—that is the true life, if only they knew." Surah Al-'Ankabūt 29:64
5. "That Day, the people will depart, separated into categories, to be shown the results of their deeds. So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it. And whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it." Surah Az-Zalzalah 99:6–8
6. "The Day every soul will find what it has done of good brought before it, and what it has done of evil; it will wish that between itself and that evil there were a great distance." Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:30
7. "Those whom the angels take in death while they are pure, saying: 'Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do.'" Surah An-Nahl 16:32
8. "Wherein they will abide forever, desiring no transfer from it." Surah Al-Kahf 18:108

9. "You were certainly in heedlessness of this, and We have removed from you your covering, so your sight today is sharp." Surah Qāf 50:22
10. "And if you could but see when the angels take the souls of those who disbelieved, striking their faces and their backs and saying: 'Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire.'" Surah Al-Anfāl 8:50
11. "And We would never punish until We had sent a messenger." Surah Al-Isrā' 17:15

Lesson in Key Points

- ☐ We move on to the two coming worlds according to the way we have shaped ourselves in the world of this life, and according to the qualities and inner dispositions we have acquired, as well as those we have lost.
- ☐ Death, in and of itself, is not torment or misery; rather, it depends on a person's deeds in the world of this life.
- ☐ Ignorance and lack of knowledge, when they are not due to negligence on the part of the accountable person, place him within the sphere of Allah's pardon and mercy, Exalted is He.
- ☐ Your existence in the world of this life is only for the purpose of developing yourself and releasing your latent human potentials, so that you may live an eternal life in Paradise, with all the diversity, depth, and greatness it contains.
- ☐ The religion that Allah has chosen for humanity to be their path and way toward Him—Glorified and Exalted is He—is Islam.
- ☐ Comparing the World of This Life with the Hereafter
- ☐ The life of Paradise is not static, monotonous, or tedious. Rather, it is filled with movement, change, and perfection as its dwellers ascend through its ranks toward the Supreme Beloved, Glorious and Majestic is He. Therefore, although the people of Paradise will abide therein forever, they will not desire any transfer from it, nor will they wish for anything better than it.

10

Divine Compassion and Kindness

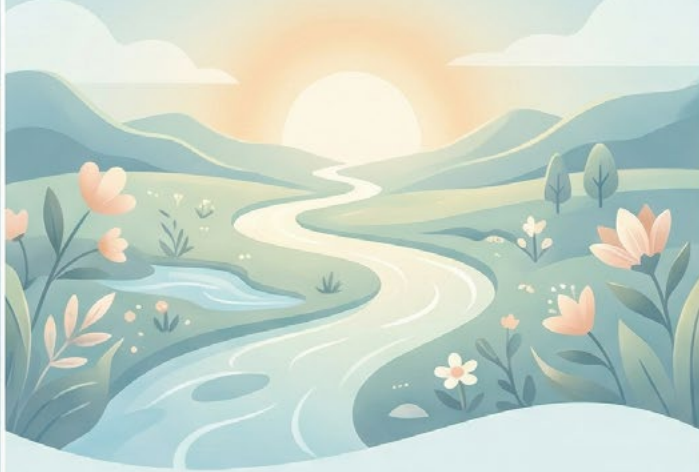
“In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the
Most Beneficent” (Surat Al-Fatiha, 1)

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Divine Kindness and Mercy

Divine Kindness in the Earthly World



The Earthly World: A Prepared Field for the Journey to God

God created the world to help humanity draw closer to Him naturally and smoothly through their daily endeavors.



The Universe is Subservient to Humanity

God has made everything in the heavens and the earth, even the angels, subservient to humanity on their spiritual journey.



Innate and Divinely Revealed Guidance

God endowed humanity with reason and innate nature, and sent religion to draw faith to their hearts and guide them to Him.



Divine Mercy in the Hereafter



Repentance: An Opportunity to Erase Sins and Transform Them into Good Deeds

Sincere repentance not only erases sins, but God can also transform them into good deeds

"Those are the ones whose evil deeds Allah will replace with good deeds." (Al-Furqan 25:70)



Additional Doors of Mercy

Allah has opened the doors of intercession and comprehensive forgiveness as an encouragement to His servants and out of His desire for their salvation.

The Scale of Deeds: A Positive Bias for Humanity

Evil Deeds (Bad Actions)	Good Deeds (Good Actions)	
 Not Accounted for unless done	 Accomplished even if not done	Intention
1 Rewarded only once	10 ^{x10} Rewarded tenfold	Reward

Divine kindness in the world

Allah is gentle with His subjects. He does everything to bring people closer to Him, to help them obey Him and to keep them away from sin. However, he does not do this with force and coercion. “Does man think that he will be left neglected?” (Quran 75:36) “Were Allah to expand the provision for His servants, they would surely create havoc on the Earth. But He sends down in a precise measure whatever He wishes. Indeed, He is all-aware, all-seeing about His servants.” (Quran 42:27)

It is out of His kindness that He created the world in a way that helps human behavior strive towards God, both smoothly and naturally, through man’s toil and so long as he follows his conscience, his nature and his intellect. “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet Him” (Quran 84: 6). He created intellect, willpower and instinct in humans to guide them to the Exalted.

God compassionately created the universe in a way that brings humans closer to Him. As such, we note that a typical human life is full of good actions. A person teaches and learns toils, marries, takes care of their family and generally deals positively with all aspects of life. In contrast, we find that the taboos and vices—which he or she acknowledges being so—are exceptional events in life about which he or she feels guilty.

God placed the heavens and the earth at our service to prepare us for the majesty for which we were created—a majesty, which the angels longed for but were not, granted. This majesty empowers men to reach the throne while still in the limited earthly world and to come closer to the point that even Gabriel did not reach, though he is the greatest of God's angels. "And He has disposed for your benefit whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth; all is from Him. There are indeed signs in that for a people who reflect." (Quran 45:13)

God placed even angels, despite their high position, at the service of human beings, to help humans attain their majestic position of

subservience to God. Indeed, even their prostration to Adam (PBUH) was a metaphor for their devotion to serving us! "When your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed I am about to create a human being out of clay. So, when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him.' Thereat the angels prostrated, all of them together, but not Iblis; he acted arrogantly, and he was one of the faithless." (Quran 38:71-74)

Allah the Almighty laid down the Islamic religion and made it lovable to humans, to guide them toward God and to instill the values and attributes of the divine in their psychological construct. "...But Allah has endeared faith to you and made it appealing in your hearts, and He has made hateful to you faithlessness, transgression and disobedience. It is such who are the right-minded." (Quran 49:7)

If we seek Allah faithfully, He will accept us and pull us toward Him. He will guide us to His path according to our energy, abilities and attributes. The Almighty does this with each one of us, as long as we give some sort of response. Contemplate this Quranic verse: “*As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways, and Allah is indeed with the virtuous.*” (Quran 29: 69)

Divine kindness in the Hereafter

However, God, in His mercy, created a system of reward and punishment that is biased in mankind’s favor. We see that Imam Ali (AS) says in the Dua (supplication) of Kumail: “So I declare with certainty that were it not for what You hast decreed concerning the chastisement of Your deniers. And what You hast foreordained concerning the everlasting home of those who stubbornly resist, You wouldst make the Fire (Hell), all of it, coolness and safety, And no one would have a place of rest or abode within it. But You—holy are Your

Names—hast sworn that You will fill it with the unbelievers.”

Most of what humans undertake in their daily lives (and what we discussed in the previous section) is rewarded to a very great degree. The reward increases in greatness if the action is done with the intent of achieving closer proximity to God.

Bad intention is not counted unless it results in actual bad behavior, while good intent is rewarded even if it is not acted upon.

Bad actions are counted as single deeds, while good actions are calculated as if they were tenfold in their likeness. “*Whoever brings virtue shall receive ten times its like; but whoever brings vice shall not be requited except with its like, and they will not be wronged.*” (Quran 6:160)

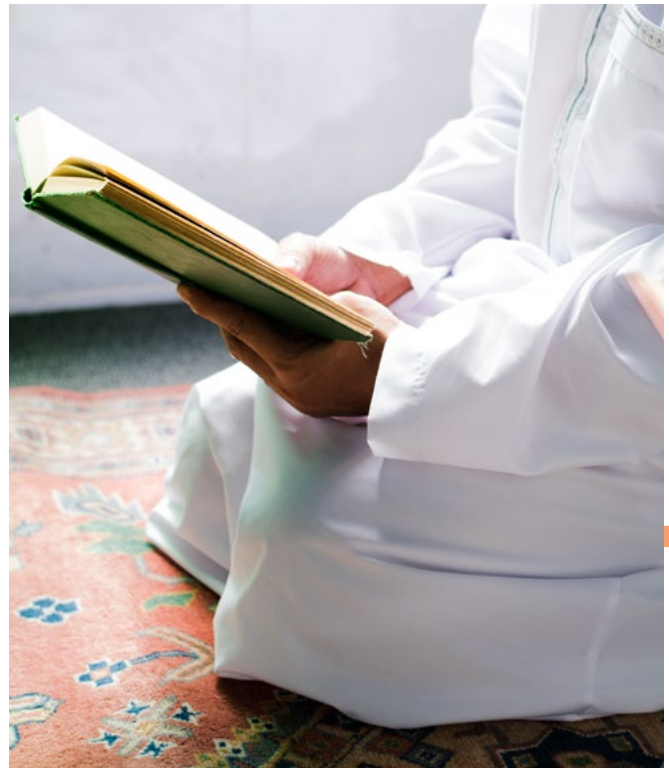
A person’s life contains many good deeds. Some of them are carried out routinely, such as charity, kinship, congregational prayer, pilgrimage, and help to nullify a person’s misdeeds.

There are even some deeds, like repentance, that not only erase misdeeds but convert them into righteous deeds. God says: “Excepting those who repent, attain faith, and act righteously. For such, Allah will replace their misdeeds with good deeds, and Allah is all-forgiving, all-merciful.” (Quran 25:70)

In contrast, bad deeds with the power to cancel out good deeds are very rare and extremely serious. They include murder and apostasy from Islam.

There is also intercession, which is the embodiment of the wilayat (guardianship) that connects mankind with goodness and with symbols such as the Quran, knowledge, kinship and in particular, the wilayat of Ahl al-Bayt (AS). God has encouraged people to rely on wilayat and has connected them with the symbols of goodness. The Prophet (PBUHF) said: “The Quran is the intercessor and the true solution” and: “I have reserved my intercession for the people of grave sins, and the doers of good have the path.”

Before and after all this, there is the forgiveness from God Almighty. “Say [that Allah declares,] ‘O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah will forgive all sins. Indeed, He is the All-forgiving, the All-merciful’” (Quran 39:53).





Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 10

Take 10 minutes to match up between the following Islamic texts and the appropriate paragraphs of the lesson:

Quranic verses:

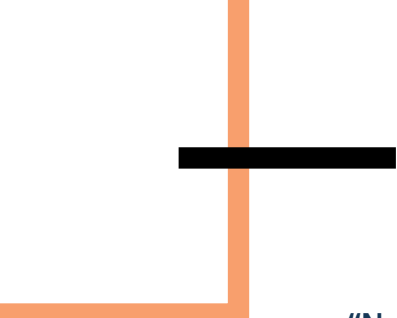
1. "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it." (Quran 84:6)
2. "[So mention] when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I am going to create a human being from clay. So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration." So the angels prostrated - all of them entirely. Except Iblees; he was arrogant and became among the disbelievers." (Quran 38:71-74)
3. It is said in the books considered by all Muslims to be about the greatest of the prophets (PBUHF) that: "My intercession on the Day of Resurrection will be for the people of greatness from my nation."
4. "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." (Quran 25:70)
5. "And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought." (Quran 45:13)
6. "And if Allah had extended [excessively] provision for His servants, they would have committed tyranny throughout the earth. But He sends [it] down in an amount which He wills. Indeed He is, of His servants, Acquainted and Seeing." (Quran 42:27)
7. "Does man think that he will be left neglected?" (Quran 75:36)

8. "And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good." (Quran 29:69)
9. "Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof; and they will not be wronged." (Quran L160)
10. "...but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided" (Quran 49:7)
11. "Say, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah . Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful."" (Quran 39:53)

A Summary of the Lesson:

- ☐ One of the manifestations of Allah's Mercy for us is that He allowed us to access repentance and forgiveness.
- ☐ Allah is compassionate with His creation, and He does everything in order to bring people closer to Him and to obeying Him and to keep them away from sinning against Him.
- ☐ Angels, despite their greatness and elevated position, were created by Allah to serve humans, so they can bring humanity to its great position that Allah created it for.
- ☐ Intercession with Allah is a manifestation of the link that is wilayah (allyship) with Allah, which ties humans to everything that is good. This includes the symbols of goodness, like the Quran, Knowledge, Proximity to Allah, and especially, the Progeny of the Holy Prophet (AS).
- ☐ Allah's Compassion for us includes creating the world in a way that allows us to strive towards Him in a natural fashion, through our actions in this world.
- ☐ Allah granted us everything that is in the heavens and the earth in order to prepare us for the elevated status He created us for.
- ☐ If you strive towards Allah with devotion, then He will take care of you and bring you even closer to Him. He will guide you towards His paths, in accordance to your capacities, skills and characteristics.

- ☐ Allah gave us the Islamic religion and made us love it, in order to guide us towards Him, Exalted is He, and to instill the divine values and characteristics in our consciousness.
- ☐ One of Allah's many mercies towards humanity is that He only considers an evil action in accordance to its weight, while a good action is worth 10 times its weight.
- ☐ There are actions – like repentance – that don't only remove evil actions, but rather, they turn them into good actions..



“Now We have set you ‘O Prophet’ on the ‘clear’ Way of faith. So follow it, and do not follow the desires of those who do not know ‘the truth’.” (Surat Al-Jathiya, 18)

11

Islamic Law (Sharia)



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▶ Watch The Video

Why did Allah give us the Islamic Sharia?

15:33



The image is a promotional graphic for a video. It features a QR code on the left with a central logo. To the right of the QR code is an illustration of a woman in a blue hijab and a man in a yellow shirt, both holding books and waving. Above them is a black button with a red play icon and the text 'Watch The Video'. Below the illustration is a white box with the text 'Why did Allah give us the Islamic Sharia?'. In the bottom right corner, there is a black box with the time '15:33'. The background is a light gray with some faint green leaf patterns.

What is Islamic Sharia?

Definition and Purpose



A Divine Methodology for Life

To achieve happiness and tranquility on both individual and societal levels.



A Program for Human and Societal Development

Enhances willpower and personal discipline to face life's challenges.



A System Harmonious with Nature (Fitra)

It meets human nature and cosmic laws.

Basic Principles



Based on People's Interests

What holds great benefit is obligatory, and what holds great harm is prohibited.



Accountability According to Ability

Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity or what it can handle.



Based on Establishing Proof

There is no punishment or obligation except after sending messengers and clarifying the truth.

Sources of Islamic Sharia



The Holy Quran

The Book of Allah which contains an explanation for everything; a rope extended from heaven to earth.



The Progeny and Household of the Prophet (Ahl al-Bayt)

The second weighty thing that does not part from the Holy Quran, as explained by the Prophet (PBUH).

Why did Allah give us the Islamic Sharia?

Our unconscious registers everything that happens to us, whether we know it or not, and it reacts to things in a specific manner, in accordance with our mental maps and the perspectives that are stored in it. More than 95% of our activities, behaviors, thoughts, reactions, and decisions, along with the movements we do, arise from the unconscious part of our minds, which is very hard to change and reprogram. Allah, Exalted is He, said: “Everyone acts in their own way. But your Lord knows best whose way is rightly guided.” (Surat Al-Israa, 84)

Since we fill our minds with wrong, corrupt and negative mental maps, (which we can call the darkness), 80% of our thousands of thoughts every day are negative, and 95% are repetitive on a daily basis, while 97% of our fears have no basis in reality. These thoughts arise from a pessimistic view of life.¹

¹ <https://tlexinstitute.com/how-to-effortlessly-have-more-positive-thoughts>.

“Say [to them, O Prophet], “Even if you were to possess the [infinite] treasures of my Lord’s mercy, then you would certainly withhold [them], fearing they would run out—for humankind is ever stingy!” (Surat al-Israa, 100). This verse clearly shows us that our negative thoughts do not necessarily correspond to reality, but rather, they arise from our weak mental state, even when the external reality does not require such a thought. Feelings of stress and fear are a result of weakness, and that is why Allah, Exalted is He, informs us that even if the disbelievers had access to all of Allah’s treasures, they would still fear poverty.

Your mind is always boiling with misery, and this is reflected in our worries, stress, and mental disturbances. These negative thoughts and the mental worries that afflict us become hard-rooted beliefs over time, due to their repetitiveness, and our mental maps start seeing the world and reacting to it through these beliefs. Over time, this ends up corrupting our souls, destroying our bodies, minds and lives.

These negative and harmful beliefs and mental maps, in turn, attract all the events that occur in our lives and they even turn the positive events – unconsciously – into negative experiences, which turn our lives into horrible things and a sort of punishment in its own right. “But humanity assumed it, ‘for’ they are truly wrongful ‘to themselves’ and ignorant ‘of the consequences’” (Surat Al-Ahzab, 72).

This is why “the rates of depression increased in the United States in the year 2021, in accordance to new research, surpassing 32.8%, [which means] it affects 1 in 3 adult Americans”².

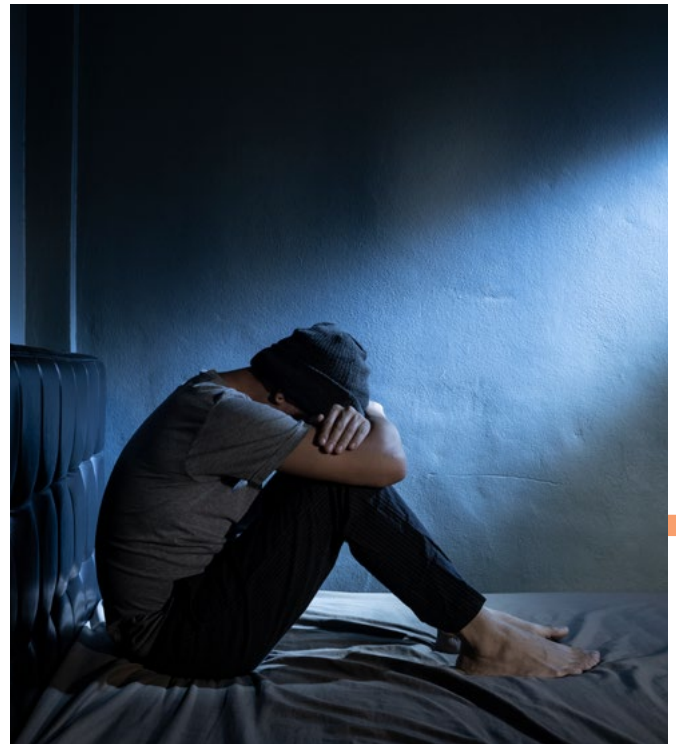
Statistics from the year 2020 showed that 21% of adult Americans suffer from mental illnesses³, and one in three young adults in the US (18-25 years old) suffer from mental illnesses.⁴

2 World Economic Forum, 18, October 2021 <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2021/10/depression-rates-us-covid-pandemic-america-mental-health/>

3 National Alliance on Mental Health, <https://www.nami.org/mhstat>

4 <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

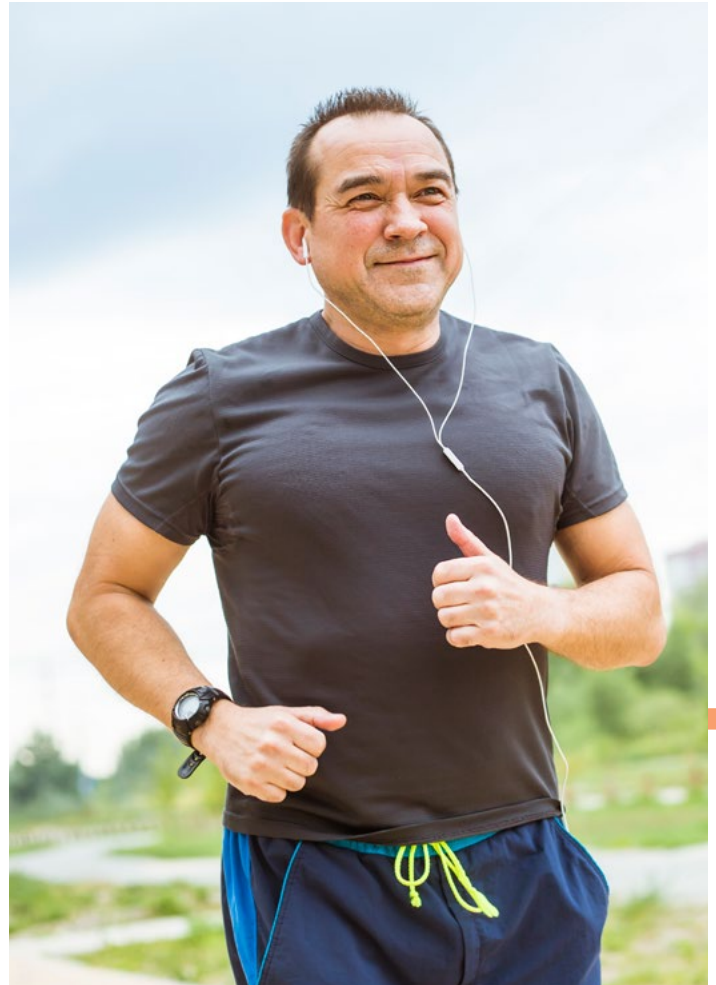
To summarize the idea, if a person were left to their own devices, they would punish themselves unless they followed a conscious and organized routine that protected them and elevated them to greatness. The Islamic Sharia is this routine or program.



Allah, Exalted is He, said: “And by the soul and ‘the One’ Who fashioned it, then with ‘the knowledge of’ right and wrong inspired it! Successful indeed is the one who purifies their soul, and doomed is the one who corrupts it!” (Surat Ash-Shams, 7-10). The Quran explicitly tells us that those of us, who care for the spiritual aspect of our personalities and our intuitive nature, are calm and happy souls. However, the unbalance occurs when a person drifts away from our intuitive nature, which is critical to maintaining our humanity and keeping it calm.

In reality, this applies to all the other aspects of human existence. If you take care of your body and follow the health instructions, then you will be healthy, you will have a good appearance and a long life, and your body will give you the best experience it can give you. However, if you do not take care of your body, it will become unhealthy and be affected by many illnesses, and it will continue to castigate you until you change how you deal with it.

Contemplate Allah’s words, Exalted is He: “Indeed, humankind was created impatient:



distressed when touched with evil, and withholding when touched with good— except those who pray,” (Surat Al-Maarij, 19-22) and then continue reading the rest of Surat Al-Maarij to learn the actions and thoughts that a person should obtain to avoid being impatient and distressed.

The verses tell us that a person becomes naturally distressed, impatient, and filled with negative thoughts if they do not cultivate the spiritual aspect of their existence.

The reason humanity was created as such was for the benefit of humanity itself, as a mercy from Allah. This is because when humanity disregards the spiritual aspect of its existence, it reduces its own humanity and becomes like any other animal, driven by its instincts, desires, and needs. By doing so, humans deprive themselves of the greatest thing they were granted, which is the reason that angels prostrated before humanity.

Because Allah has compassion for humans and does not want us to lose our humanity and ourselves. He created us with this negative

nature to drive and incite us to strive for our intuitive nature and true essence every time we stray from it. It does not only work as an internal signal for a person, but rather, it is a strong force that impedes humanity from straying away from its nature and the purpose for which it was created. The goal of this stress and impatience is to drive humanity back to its natural path when it veers off course and to keep them from following their base animalistic desires. Allah, Exalted is He, said: “We will certainly make them taste some of the minor torment ‘in this life’ before the major torment ‘of the Hereafter’, so perhaps they will return ‘to the Right Path’.” (Surat as-Sajdah 21)

The practical solution to this issue is using your mind’s abilities to fortify the positive beliefs in your existence and your unconscious mind, to change your negative mental maps into positive mental maps. “Indeed, Allah would never change a people’s state ‘of favour’ until they change their own state ‘of faith’.” (Surat ar-Raad, 11)

When you change your mental maps in accordance with true and positive beliefs,

your unconscious mind will start working, both naturally and automatically, to change your life from a miserable state to a happy and calm life. This occurs first by reprogramming itself and then by reacting to the events, it passes through and the input it gets in a positive and healthy manner, which instills positivity, happiness and calmness in you. This task is the purpose of our existence in this world, and it is the very essence of worshipping Allah, Exalted and Almighty is He. *“Allah is the Guardian of the believers—He brings them out of darkness and into light. As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness. It is they who will be the residents of the Fire. They will be there forever.”* (Surat Al-Baqarah, 257)

However, for these thoughts and beliefs to become part of who you are and to eliminate any traces of negative and destructive thoughts from your thoughts, you have to combine this new and healthy vision of life with the actions that are derived from this vision, being as mindful as possible. This is no small task, and it often requires quite a

significant effort, as well as dedication and concentration. That is why the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) considered the jihad of the soul (that is, a person striving to improve) to be the greater jihad.

Notice, for example, how the Quran says that humans are impatient, distressed, and wanting of money in the verses that were mentioned above from Surat Al-Maarij, but it exempted those who prayed – that is those who carry out the healthy habits and actions – and it said: *“except those who pray”* (Surat Al-Maarij 22). Afterwards, it lists a set of actions that these exempted people carry out, which liberate them from horrible traits, like distress, impatience, and constant vigilance [over their wealth]. However, not all the actions and beliefs that you assume are positive are going to make you happy. Rather, these actions and beliefs should be correct and realistic, and that is why your thoughts, beliefs, and world vision should be coordinated with your soul and intuitive nature so you can be calm and happy. Otherwise, your unconscious mind will continue to hurt and suffer.

What is Islamic Sharia?

The Islamic Sharia is the methodology provided by God to help humans to progress towards Him: “Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam” (Quran 3:19). However, what does Islamic Sharia actually consist of?

Islamic Sharia can be thought of as the “training program” favored by God, which increases individuals and societies’ proximity to God in a way that is both natural and smooth. It is harmonious with human instinct, consistent with human nature, and accords with the elements and the cosmic laws. “This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.” (Quran5:3)

The Islamic system of rule, including all acts of worship, represents the perfect combination of routine and non-routine acts for enhancing human willpower, self-control, and personal discipline. It helps humans to achieve enormous inner strength and thus to face life’s challenges, pursue God, and build a happier and more enlightened life. God

created these systems and mechanisms not only to be optimal but also robust enough to survive until the end of humanity’s days. “And Allah would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of all things.” (Quran 9:115).

God Almighty laid out duties, taboos, and other provisions, and classified them according to whether they further the best interests of humankind or not. Highly beneficial things were made compulsory, while those that do terrible damage were forbidden. Those that are less beneficial, but still of some benefit, were classified as “advisable” and so on.

However, God Almighty does not ask anything of his subjects without first announcing it clearly in a way that each individual can understand: “And never would We punish until We sent a messenger” (Quran 17:15). Moreover, He does not burden us with more than we can accommodate, handle or afford “Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity” (Quran 2:286).

The sources of Islamic Sharia

Allah, Exalted is He, has shown us this path (Islamic Sharia) and set its rules and details in His Great Book. “We have revealed to you the Book as an explanation of all things, a guide, a mercy, and good news for those who ‘fully’ submit.” (Surat An-Nahl, 89) and “This is a blessed Book We have revealed. So follow it and be mindful ‘of Allah’, so you may be shown mercy.” (Surat An-Anaam, 155)

The sources of Islamic law from which Muslims take their teachings and doctrine are the Quran and the Sunna.

It was reported in Sahih Muslim, Jami al-Tirmidhi, the Musnad of Imam Ahmad, Sunan Abi Dawood, Mustadrak Al-Sahihain and other Sahih volumes that the Messenger of Allah (PBUHF) said: “Indeed, I am leaving among you, those which if you hold fast to them, you shall not be misguided after me. One of them is greater than the other: The Book of Allah is a rope extended from the sky to the earth and my family—Ahl-ul-bait—and they shall not split until they meet at the ‘Hawdh’, so look at how you deal with them after me.”



Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 11

Take ten minutes to match up the Quranic verses with the Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

1. "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life" (Quran 16:97)
2. "And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims." (Quran 16:89)
3. "...but Allah has endeared to you the faith and has made it pleasing in your hearts and has made hateful to you disbelief, defiance and disobedience. Those are the [rightly] guided." (Quran 49:7)
4. "O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life." (Quran 8:24)
5. "And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers." (Quran 3:85)
6. "And whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty." (Quran 59:7)
7. "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian." (Quran 5:9)
8. "O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination." (Quran 31:17)

9. "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error -" (Quran 62:2)
10. "It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it." (Quran 9:33)
11. "There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion." (Quran 2:256)

Islamic concepts

- ☐ In addition to being a statement of facts and knowledge, the Holy Quran is a book of guidance and mercy for Muslims.
- ☐ The Islamic legal system strengthens the power of will and self-control in man.
- ☐ Sharia is the methodology that God has provided for man towards walk to Allah.
- ☐ No one can compel anyone else to follow any religion.

- ☐ Islam is a message that came to all the world, to all human beings, and the day will come when Islam will rule the whole earth.
- ☐ Following Islamic Sharia is the path that will facilitate the smooth progress of a human's life through society, the world of al-Dunya and the Hereafter
- ☐ The goal of Islamic law is the development and advancement of humankind.
- ☐ Observing Islamic Sharia is the way for humans to achieve happiness and comfort
- ☐ The Quran is not subject to change or distortion over time.
- ☐ The Sunnah are a source of Islamic Sharia.
- ☐ Islamic Sharia is in line with the innate nature of Islam.



▶ Watch The Video

هو خاتم النبيين وسيد المرسلين وأفضلهم على
الإسلامية، كما أنه سيد البشر جميعاً، لا يوازيه ما
في مكرمة، ولا يقاربه عاقل في عقل، ولا يشبهه
خلق عظيم من أول نشأة البشر

■ Prophethood

4:57

12

Prophethood

“There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.” (Quran 9: 128)



The Concept of Prophethood in Islam

Prophethood is one of the manifestations of divine kindness, as Allah chooses messengers from among His righteous servants to guide humanity toward its perfection in this world and the Hereafter, and to teach them wisdom and purify them from bad morals.

Section 1: The Purpose of Prophethood



Divine kindness for guiding humanity

A divine function aimed at guiding people toward what benefits them, purifying them, and teaching them wisdom.

“

“... reciting to you Our verses, purifying you, and teaching you the Book and wisdom ...”

Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 151 

Section Two: The Qualities of the Prophet



The most complete moral and intellectual qualities

Such as courage, intelligence, truthfulness, and trustworthiness, so that he is worthy of general leadership.

Free from vices before the mission

In order to gain the trust of hearts, reassure souls, and be worthy of this divine station.

Section 3: The Infallibility of the Prophets



Infallibility: absolute freedom from sins and error

It includes minor and major sins, forgetfulness, and even anything that contradicts noble conduct.

“

“Nor does he speak from desire. It is only a revelation revealed.”

Surah An-Najm, Verses 3-4 

Prophethood is one of the most important manifestations of God's divine kindness to us. Prophethood is a divine function. Allah looks at his righteous subjects and heirs, chooses those who are perfect in their humanity, and sends them to the people to guide them to the right path in the earthly world and the Hereafter

He sends prophets to reveal messages to humankind and to purify them, steering them away from the evils of corrupt morals and customs. The prophets teach wisdom and bestow knowledge and happiness on people. They show us the right path to happiness and goodness, so that we can reach perfection and rise to the higher levels of both this world and the afterlife: *"As We sent to you an Apostle from among yourselves, who recites to you Our signs, and purifies you, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you did not know."* (Quran 2: 151)

A prophet should be endowed with perfect moral and mental qualities — including courage, diplomacy, political wit, management abilities, patience, prudence, and intelligence — so that others are inspired to emulate or

live up to him. Without such qualities, a prophet does not merit his position of public leadership over all creation, nor does he merit the power to administer the entire world.

A prophet must also be pure, trustworthy, honest of character, and have been free from vices prior to his mission, to reassure people's hearts and souls of his honesty and to ensure that he deserves his divine and exalted position. *"Allah chooses from the angels messengers and from the people. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing."* (Quran 22: 75)

All prophets are infallible. Infallibility means rising above all sins and wrongs, large or small, and above errors and forgetfulness, even though the prophet is physically capable of these faults. What sets a prophet apart is that they choose not to commit them. Prophets must also refrain from unacceptable public behaviors, such as getting into conflict with other people, eating in the road, laughing boisterously, and others like them.

We believe absolutely in the infallibility of the prophets, that they brought us laws that are

correct, and that they lived perfect lives. Moreover, they were infallible both before and after their adolescence, before and after they became prophets: “By the star when it descends, (1) Your companion [Muhammad] has not strayed, nor has he erred, (2) Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination. (3) It is not but a revelation revealed, (4) Taught to him by one intense in strength” (Quran 53: 1-5).

As such, if we encounter a verse or narration that initially appears to compromise a prophet’s infallibility and perfection, we should approach it by exploring its true meaning—the one that corresponds with the context and the nature of the episode being discussed, and consistent with the prophets’ infallibility and perfection. An example of this is our interpretation of the following saying of the Holy Prophet (PBUHF): “That Allah may forgive for you what preceded of your sin and what will follow” (Quran 48:2). We should also reject all stories and narrations that refer to the shortcomings of the Greatest Prophet (PBUHF) or disparage him or any of God’s prophets in any way.



Prophet Muhammad (PBUHF)

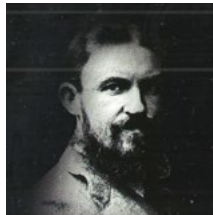
Muhammad is the last of the prophets and messengers, the greatest of them all, and the bearer of the Islamic message. He is the master of all human beings. No-one is like him in honor, matches him mentally, or even looks like him, for he is of great birth. This includes all humans, from the dawn of the first people to the Day of Judgment: “And indeed, you are of a great moral character” (Quran 68:4).



Optional Reading

What Do Eminent Non-Muslims Say About the Prophet Muhammad?

Sir George Bernard Shaw, an Irish playwright and a cofounder of the London School of Economics. He is the only person to have been awarded both an Oscar and a Nobel Prize for Literature; The Genuine Islam



"The world is in dire need of a man with the mind of Muhammad; After looking into the story of this man, I found it to be an amazing and miraculous one and I concluded that he was never an enemy of Christianity and must instead be called the savior of humanity. In my opinion, if he were to be given control over the world today, he would solve our problems and secure the peace and happiness that the world is longing for."

Barnaby Rogerson, A British Author, Publisher and Historian; Prophet Muhammed – A Biography



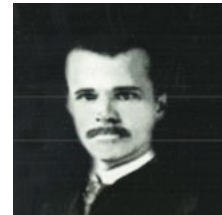
"...he represents almost everything of human value. Muhammad, Prophet of God, the last and the greatest of that long line of men, from Adam through to Abraham, Moses and Jesus, who have struggled to bring the word of God to humankind. Even when viewed in an entirely secular perspective he remains a super hero..."

**Alfred Martin, American
Philosopher and
Historian; The Great
Religious Teachers of
the East**



“The Successful prophet Nor is anything in religion’s history more remarkable than the way in which Muhammad fitted his transfiguring ideas in to the existing social system of Arabia. To his everlasting credit it must be said that in lifting to a higher plane of life the communities of his day and place, he achieved that which neither the Judaism nor the Christianity of Medieval Arabia could accomplish. Nay more, in the fulfillment of that civilizing work, Muhammad rendered invaluable service not only to Arabia, but also to the entire world.”

**Samuel Parsons Scott,
British Historian and
Author; History of the
Moorish Empire in
Europe**



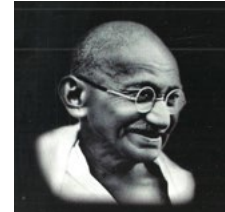
“The glories which invest the history of Islam may be entirely derived from the valor, the virtue, the intelligence, the genius, of man. If this be conceded, the largest measure of credit is due to him who conceived its plan, promoted its impulse, and formulated the rules which insured its success. In any event, if the object of religion be the inculcation of morals, the diminution of evil, the promotion of human happiness, the expansion of the human intellect, if the performance of good works will avail in the great day when mankind shall be summoned to its final reckoning, it is neither irreverent nor unreasonable to admit that Muhammad was indeed an Apostle of God.”

Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe, German writer, painter, biologist, polymath, theoretical physicist. Considered as genius of modern German literature; Allah's Sun Over The Occident Rendition of Mahomets Gesang



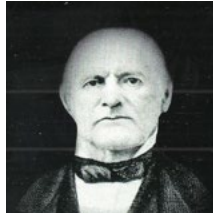
"Us Europeans, with all our concepts, could not reach what Mohammad has reached, and no one will be able to precede him. I have looked in the history of humanity for an example and found that it was Mohammad, as the truth must be revealed. Indeed, Mohammad succeeded to subdue the entire world to monotheism. "I have searched throughout history for a role model to man, and I found none but the Prophet Mohammad."

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, loved by Indians and called as 'Father of the Nation' for his contributions to Indian independence. He inspired several nonviolent movements across the world; Young India



"I wanted to know the best of the life of one who holds today an undisputed sway over the hearts of millions of mankind.... I became more than ever convinced that it was not the sword that won a place for Islam in those days in the scheme of life. It was the rigid simplicity, the utter self-effacement of the Prophet the scrupulous regard for pledges, his intense devotion to his friends and followers, his intrepidity, his fearlessness, his absolute trust in God and in his own mission..."

Reverend Bosworth Smith, An American Protestant Episcopal Bishop; Muhammad and Muhammadanism



“Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope's pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man ruled by a right Divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of power.” “On the whole, the wonder is not how much but how little, under different circumstances, Muhammad differed from himself. In the shepherd of the desert, in the Syrian trader, in the solitary of Mount Hira, in the reformer in the minority of one, in the exile of Madinah, in the acknowledged conqueror, in the equal of the Persian Chosroes and the Greek Heraclius, we can still trace substantial unity. I doubt whether any other man whose external conditions changed so much, ever himself changed less to meet them.”

Jawaharlal Nehru, President of Indian National Congress and The First Prime Minister of India; Glimpses of World History



“Like the founders of some other religions, Mohammad was a rebel against many of the existing social customs. The religion he preached, by its simplicity and directness and its flavor of democracy and equality, appealed to the masses in the neighboring countries that had been ground down long enough by autocratic kings and equally autocratic and domineering priests.”

Alphonse de LaMartaine, a French writer, poet and politician who was instrumental in the foundation of the Second Republic; Historie De La Turquie



"If greatness of purpose, smallness of means, and astonishing results are the three criteria of a human genius, who could dare compare any great man in history with Muhammad? The most famous men created arms, laws, and empires only. They founded, if anything at all, no more than material powers which often crumbled away before their eyes. This man moved not only armies, legislations, empires, peoples, dynasties, but millions of men in one third of the then inhabited world; and more than that, he moved the altars, the gods, the religions, the ideas, the beliefs and the souls."

Thomas Carlyle, Heroes, A Scottish writer, essayist, historian and teacher during the Victorian era; Hero Worship and the Heroic in History



"It is a great shame for anyone to listen to the accusation that Islam is a lie and that Muhammad was a fabricator and a deceiver. We saw that he remained steadfast upon his principles, with firm determination; Kind and generous, compassionate, pious, virtuous, with real manhood, hardworking and sincere. Besides all these qualities, he was lenient with others, tolerant, kind, cheerful and praiseworthy and perhaps he would joke and tease his companions. He was just, truthful, smart, pure, magnanimous and present minded; his face was radiant as if he had lights within him to illuminate the darkest of nights; he was a great man by nature who was not educated in a school nor nurtured by a teacher as he was not in need of any of this. His Simplicity: No Emperor with his tiaras was obeyed as this man in a cloak of his own clothing. During three and twenty years of rough actual trial, I find something of a veritable Hero necessary for that, of itself".

Prof K S Ramakrishna Rao, Professor of Philosophy, University of Mysore, India; Mohammad: The Prophet of Islam



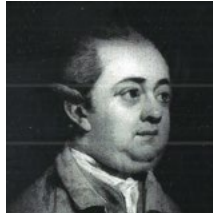
"The personality of Mohammad! It is most difficult to get into the truth of it. Only a glimpse of it I can catch. What a dramatic succession of picturesque scenes. There is Mohammad the Prophet, there is Mohammad the General; Mohammad the King; Mohammad the Warrior; Mohammad the Businessman; Mohammad the Preacher; Mohammad the Philosopher; Mohammad the Statesman; Mohammad the Orator; Mohammad the reformer; Mohammad the Refuge of orphans; Mohammad the Protector of slaves; Mohammad the Emancipator of women; Mohammad the Law-giver; Mohammad the Judge; Mohammad the Saint. And in all these magnificent roles, in all these departments of human activities, he is like a hero...."

Annie Besant, A prominent British Theosophist, Women's rights activist, Writer, Orator and President of the Indian National Congress; The Life and Teaching of Muhammed



"It is impossible for anyone who studies the personality of the great Prophet of the Arabs, and come to know how this prophet used to live, and how he taught the people, but to feel respect towards this honorable prophet; one of the great messengers whom Allah sent". "His readiness to undergo persecution for his beliefs, the high moral character of the men who believed in him and looked up to him as leader, and the greatness of his ultimate achievement all argue his fundamental integrity. To suppose Muhammed an impostor raises more problems than it solves. Moreover, none of the great figures of history is so poorly appreciated in the West as Muhammed".

Edward Gibbon, English historian and Member of Parliament; The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire



“The good sense of Mahomet despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of a hermit, he observed without effort of vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab”; “The greatest success of Mahomet’s life was effected by sheer moral force.”; “... ‘I believe in One God and Mahomet the Apostle of God’ is the simple and invariable profession of Islam. The intellectual image of the Deity has never been degraded by any visible idol; the honors of the prophet have never transgressed the measure of human virtue, and his living precepts have restrained the gratitude of his disciples within the bounds of reason and religion...”

William James Durant, A prolific American writer, historian and philosopher; The Story of Civilization



“If we judge greatness by influence, he was one of the giants of history. He undertook to raise the spiritual and moral level of a people harassed into barbarism by heat and foodless wastes, and he succeeded more completely when any other reformer seldom has any man so fully realized his dream.... When he began, Arabia was a desert flotsam of idolatrous tribes; When he died it was a nation. In the year 565, Justinian died, master of a great empire. Five years later, Muhammad was born into a poor family in a country three quarters desert, sparsely peopled by nomad tribes whose total wealth could hardly have furnished the sanctuary of St. Sophia. No one in those years would have dreamed that within a century these nomads would conquer half of Byzantine Asia, all Persia and Egypt, most of

North Africa, and be on their way to Spain. The explosion of the Arabian Peninsula into the conquest and conversion of half the Mediterranean world is the most extraordinary phenomenon in medieval history."

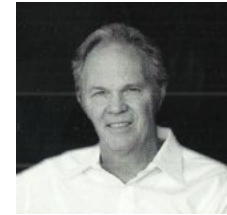
Washington Irving, An American author, biographer and historian; Mahomet and His Successors



"In his private dealings he was just. He treated friends and strangers, the rich and poor, the powerful and weak, with equity, and was beloved by the common people for the affability with which he received them, and listened to their complaints. "His military triumphs awakened no pride nor vain glory, as they would have done had they been effected for selfish purposes. In the time of his greatest power, he maintained the same simplicity of manners and appearance as in the days of his adversity. So far from affecting a regal state, he was displeased if, on entering a room, any unusual testimonials of respect

were shown to him. If he aimed at a universal dominion, it was the dominion of faith; As to the temporal rule which grew up in his hands, as he used it without ostentation, so he took no step to perpetuate it in his family."

Michael Wolfe, American Poet, Author and Film Maker; Muhammad: Legacy of a Prophet



"He tells them to be good to each other and not to violate each other's rights. For men and women to treat each other humanely, for brothers and sisters to treat each other well, and for Muslims to treat each other as brothers and sisters. And, perhaps most importantly, he calls an end to revenge, to blood killing, to the vendetta, which has bled this culture terribly since he was born. At the end of Muhammad's sermon, he does not list his achievements..."

**Sir William Muir, Famous
'Hate Islam' scholar and
Scottish colonial
administrator; Life of
Muhammad**



"A remarkable feature was the urbanity and consideration with which Muhammad treated even the most insignificant of his followers. Modesty and kindliness, patience, self-denial, and generosity, pervaded his conduct, and riveted the affections of all around him. He disliked saying no. If unable to answer a petitioner in the affirmative, he preferred silence. He was not known ever to refuse an invitation to the house even of the meanest, nor to decline a proffered present however small. He possessed the rare faculty of making each individual in a company think that he was the favored guest. If he met anyone rejoicing at success, he would seize him eagerly and cordially by the hand. With the bereaved and afflicted, he sympathized tenderly. Gentle and unbending towards little children, he would not disdain to accost a group of them at play with the salutation of peace. He shared his food, even in times of scarcity, with others, and was sedulously

solicitous for the personal comfort of everyone about him. A kindly and benevolent disposition pervaded all those illustrations of his character."

**Stobart J W H,
Founder, Society for
Promoting; Islam and
its Founder**



"Judged by the smallness of the means at his disposal, and the extent and permanence of the work that he accomplished, no name in world's history shines with a more specious luster than that of the Prophet of Mecca. To the impulse, which he gave, numberless dynasties have owed their existence, fair cities and stately palaces and temples have arisen, and wide provinces became obedient to the Faith. In addition, beyond all this, his words have governed the belief of generations, been accepted as their rule of life, and their certain guide to the world to come. At a thousand shrines, the voices of the faithful invoke blessings on him, whom they esteem the very Prophet of God, the seal of the Apostles... Judged by the standards to human renown, the glory of what mortal can compare with his?"

**Dr. Gustav Weil, A
German Orientalist,
Author and Translator;
History of the Islamic
Peoples**



“Muhammad was a shining example to his people. His character was pure and stainless. His house, his dress, his food they were characterized by a rare simplicity. So unpretentious was he that he would receive from his companions no special mark of reverence, nor would he accept any service from his slave, which he could do for himself. He was accessible to all and at all times. He visited the sick and was full of sympathy for all. Unlimited was his benevolence and generosity as also was his anxious care for the welfare of the community.”

**Stanley Lane Poole, British
Orientalist, archaeologist
and professor of Arabic;
Speeches and Table Talk of
the Prophet Muhammad**



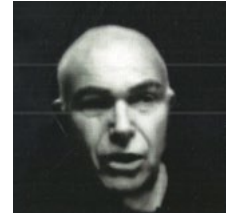
“He was very fond of children; He would stop them in the streets and pat their little heads. He never struck anyone in his life. When asked to curse someone he replied, “I have not been sent to curse, but to be a mercy to mankind “. He visited the sick, followed any bier he met, accepted the invitation of a slave to dinner, mended his own clothes, milked the goats, and waited upon himself, relates summarily another tradition. He never first withdrew his hand out of another man’s palm, and turned not before the other man had turned. “He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; Those who came near him loved him; Those who described him would say, I have never seen his like either before or after. He was of great taciturnity, but when he spoke it was with emphasis and deliberation and no one could forget what he said.”

**James Albert Michener,
An American author of
more than 40 titles; Islam:
The Misunderstood
Religion**



"In all things Muhammad was profoundly practical. When his beloved son Ibrahim died, an eclipse occurred and rumors of God's personal condolence quickly arose. Whereupon Muhammad is said to have announced, 'An eclipse is a phenomenon of nature. It is foolish to attribute such things to the death or birth of a human being'. Like almost every major prophet before him, Muhammad fought shy of serving as the transmitter of God's word sensing his own inadequacy. But the Angel commanded 'Read'. As far as we know, Muhammad was unable to read or write, but he began to dictate those inspired words, which would soon revolutionize a large segment of the earth: "There is one God"."

**Professor Alfred Kroner,
Professor of Geology at
Johannes Gutenberg
University, Germany;
Documentary: The Truth**



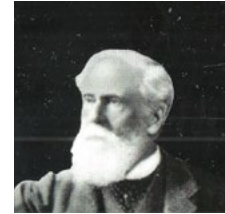
"Thinking about many of these questions and thinking where Muhammad came from, he was after all a Bedouin. I think it is almost impossible that he could have known about things like the common origin of the universe, because scientists have only found out within the last few years with very complicated and advanced technological methods that this is the case. Somebody who did not know something about nuclear physics 1400 years ago could not, I think, be in a position to find out from his own mind for instance that the earth and the heavens had the same origin, or many others of the questions that we have discussed here"

Michael H. Hart, An American astrophysicist and historian; Documentary: The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History



“My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world’s most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the secular and religious levels. It is probable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity... It is this unparalleled combination of secular and religious influence which I feel entitles Muhammad to be considered the most influential single figure in human history.”

James George Roche Forlong, Chief Engineer to the government of Oudh, A Major General of the Indian Army and Honorary Associate of The Rationalist Press Association; Short Studies in the Science of Comparative Religions



“The Virtuous Prophet, after a long, very full and candid study of the great Arabian and his faith, his public and private character, virtues and defects; his times and circumstances – a study extending over forty years and in close connection with Muhammadans of all sects and nations, we must confess that the Prophet stands high in the list of the greatest of the Earth’s rulers and makers of History... Alike in camp and council, as a governor of men, administrator and organizer of brave and turbulent tribes or settled nations. Muhammad commanded the respect of statesmen, friends and foes, and was loved, honored and esteemed by all privileged to know him privately and publicly.”

Pringle Kennedy, British Historian, Barrister and Author; Arabian Society at the Time of Muhammad



"To those of us, to whom the man is everything, the milieu but little, he is the supreme instance of what can be done by one man. Even others, who hold that the conditions of time and place, the surroundings of every sort, the capacity of receptivity of the human mind, have, more than an individual effort, brought about the great steps in the world's history, cannot well deny, that even if this step were to come, without Muhammad, it would have been indefinitely delayed. Whatever the opinion one may have of this extraordinary man, whether it be that of the devout Muslim who considers him the last and greatest herald of God's word, or of the fanatical Christian of former days, who considered him an emissary of the Evil One... there can be no difference as to the immensity of the effect which his life has had on the history of the world."

J H Denison, American Psychologist and author on Personality Development; Emotions as the Basis of Civilization



"In the fifth and sixth centuries, the civilized world stood on the verge of chaos. The old emotional cultures that had made civilization possible, since they had given to operate a sense of unity and of reverence for their rulers, had broken down, and nothing had been found adequate to take their place... It seemed then that the great civilization, which had taken four thousand years to construct, was on the verge of disintegration, and that humankind was likely to return to that condition of barbarism where every tribe and sect was against the next, and law and order were unknown. The new sanctions created by Christianity were creating divisions and destruction instead of unity and order.... Was there any emotional culture that could be brought in to gather humankind once more to unity and to save civilization? It was among the Arabs that the man was born who was to unite the whole known world of the east and south."

Major Arthur Glyn Leonard, British Military Expert; Islam, Her Moral and Spiritual Value



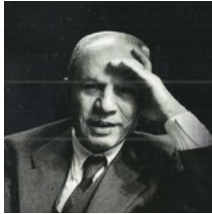
"If ever any man on this earth has found God; If ever any man has devoted his life for the sake of God with a pure and holy zeal then, without doubt, and most certainly that man was the Holy Prophet of Arabia. It was the genius of Mohammed, the spirit that he breathed into the Arabs through the soul of Islam that exalted them. That raised them out of the lethargy and low level of tribal stagnation up to the high watermark of national unity and empire. It was in the sublimity of Mohammed's deism, the simplicity, the sobriety and purity it inculcated the fidelity of its founder to his own tenets that acted on their moral and intellectual fiber with all the magnetism of true inspiration."

Jules Masserman, American Psychoanalyst; Who Were History's Greatest Leaders?



"Leaders must fulfill three functions provide for the wellbeing of the led, provide a social organization in which people feel relatively secure, and provide them with one set of beliefs. People like Pasteur and Salk are leaders in the first sense. People like Gandhi and Confucius, on one hand, and Alexander, Caesar and Hitler on the other, are leaders in the second and perhaps the third sense. Jesus and Buddha belong in the third category alone. Perhaps the greatest leader of all times was Mohammad, who combined all three functions. To a lesser degree, Moses did the same."

**Philip K. Hitti,
A Maronite Christian
scholar of Islam who
introduced the field of
Arab Culture Studies to
the United States;
History of the Arabs**



“Within a brief span of mortal life, Muhammad called forth of unpromising material, a nation, never welded before; in a country that was hitherto but a geographical expression he established a religion which in vast areas surpassed Christianity and Judaism, and laid the basis of an empire that was soon to embrace within its far-flung boundaries the fairest provinces the then civilized world.

“Even at the height of his glory Muhammad led, as in his days of obscurity, an unpretentious life in one of those clay houses consisting, as do all old-fashioned houses of present-day Arabia and Syria, of a few rooms opening into a courtyard and accessible only from it. He was often seen mending his own clothes and was at all times within the reach of his people.”

Sources:

(Mercy To The World: Muhammed (PBUHF), Br. Asifuddin Muhammed, 2012, Published by: Islamic Academy For Comparative Religion) <https://archive.org/details/ProphetMUHAMMMPeaceBeUponHim/page/n3?q=history+of+Islam+may+be+entirely+derived>



Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 12

Take five minutes to align the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

1. "Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel," (Quran 7:157)
2. "And We have certainly diversified for the people in this Qur'an from every [kind] of example, but most of the people refused [anything] except disbelief. And they say, "We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring. Or [until] you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force [and abundance]. Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed or you bring Allah and the angels before [us]. Or you have a house of gold or you ascend into the sky. And [even then], we will not believe in your ascension until you bring down to us a book we may read." Say, "Exalted is my Lord! Was I ever but a human messenger?" And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said, "Has Allah sent a human messenger?"" (Quran 17:89-94)
3. "And if, when they wronged themselves, they had come to you, [O Muhammad], and asked forgiveness of Allah and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them, they would have found Allah Accepting of repentance and Merciful." (Quran 4:64)
4. "And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to state clearly for them, and Allah sends astray [thereby] whom He wills and



guides whom He wills. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (Quran 14:4)

5. “And those who disbelieved say, “Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?” You are only a warner, and for every people is a guide.” (Quran 13:7)
6. “And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path.” (Quran 3:101)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ God did not send the prophets or design the concept of religious vocation in the form of a religious miracle, nor did he authorize the prophets to act as his official representatives; rather, he sent them speaking ordinary

tongues, which they used to meet with people, talk with them and reveal the truth. This was their only role.

- ☐ God invites us to make supplications in the name of the Holy Prophet (PBUHF)
- ☐ The present of the Great Prophet (PBUHF) among the people of the Muslim nation played an important role in its guidance.
- ☐ The true path to faith and guidance is reason, not helplessness.
- ☐ Mohammed (PBUHF) was spoken of by the earlier heavenly religions prior to His mission.
- ☐ God did not leave any nation or people without a reformer.

13

Why Trials?

"We will certainly test you ʻbelieversʼ until We prove those of you who ʻtrulyʼ struggle ʻin Allahʼs causeʼ and remain steadfast, and reveal how you conduct yourselves." (Surat Muhammad, 31)

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Why Trials?

The Wisdom of Afflictions in the Islamic Perspective

The Divine Wisdom Behind Trials



Trials: Divine Kindness and an Educational Program

A means of teaching the human being, developing their abilities, and strengthening their determination.



A Test of the Sincerity of Faith

To distinguish those who are truthful in their faith from those who are false, as mentioned in the Holy Qur'an.



A path to closeness to God

It pushes us to turn to Allah and strengthens within us the feeling of servitude to Him.

How Do We Turn Trials into Blessings?



The value of a trial lies in how you interact with it

Your positive outlook and conviction are what determine its effect on you.

The enjoyable pain in sports

Like the feeling of exhaustion while practicing a beloved sport; the pain has a higher purpose.



“The true blessing and calamity are what come from you, The enjoyable pain in sports

Your reaction is what shapes your eternal happiness or misery.

Among the most prominent manifestations of divine kindness are trials and tribulations. Allah prepared two “programs” to teach and guide us: the first, legislative and the second, cosmic. Each brings its own difficulties and sources of adversity. With the legislative program, the challenge comes from the obligation to worship, and with the cosmic program, calamities of all kinds are sent to test us. “Do the people think that they will be left to say, “We believe” and they will not be tried? (2) But We have certainly tried those before them, and Allah will surely make evident those who are truthful, and He will surely make evident the liars.” (Quran 29: 2-3)

Every day of our lives, we encounter both painful and pleasurable experiences, but according to Islamic teachings, it is through trying to avoid pain and achieve happiness that we nurture humanity in our souls. These efforts to better our circumstances are the means by which we gain the knowledge and motivation to reform ourselves and express creativity. Difficulties strengthen our determination and elevate our potential. By tackling them, we are taking the essential first

step towards growing closer to Allah. “For indeed, with hardship [will be] ease (5) Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease (6) So when you have finished [your duties], then stand up [for worship] (7) And to your Lord direct [your] longing” (Quran 94: 5-8).

Moreover, when we seek to increase pleasure and remove pain, we naturally turn to Allah to fulfill these needs, or we offer thanks and gratitude when He grants us something good. So, pursuing happiness leads us to worship Allah, which is the second step towards achieving proximity to Him.

It is not that we should not feel aggrieved when facing tribulations, nor that we should refrain from enjoying the pleasures of life. It is just that we should not let those pains or pleasures dominate us, overshadow our souls, and consume our intellects, nor should we let them affect the beautiful ideas or habits we possess, even by a single degree.

What is necessary is that, as human beings, we should use life's pains and pleasures to purify and develop our souls. As such, our

contentedness with the divine decree of Allah is not contradicted by the pain we feel during trials because the relationship between the two is more than just one-dimensional.

It is not like the feeling of drinking lemon juice and tasting acidity and sweetness at the same time. Rather, it is like the feeling of stress, fatigue and pain when enjoying a game of football with friends or participating in other enjoyable yet challenging activities.

Because of all this, we can feel satisfied with our trials. Furthermore, we can feel happy about the knowledge that they bring us closer to Allah the Almighty, so long as we make positive efforts to get rid of and solve them. This increases our degree of pleasure in paradise. However, it does not change the reality of painful tribulations, or the fact that the same pain (and the same pleasure) is the heat that allows us to shape our souls. *“Do you suppose that you shall enter paradise though there has not yet come to you the like of [what befell] those who went before you? Stress and distress befell them and they were convulsed until the apostle and the faithful who were*

with him said, ‘When will Allah’s help [come]?’ Look! Allah’s help is indeed near!” (Quran 2:214)

The other main idea to grasp is that our interaction with these temptations and the extent of our resultant feelings of pain and happiness, and our reactions toward them are very much related to our mental maps, convictions, and perceptions. In addition, our ability to distinguish between illusions and reality, as we will discuss in detail in the lesson “Reality in Life”.



We must remember that whatever trials and blessings we face cease upon being perceived by us. Their significance is shaped by our perception of them, and our perceptions are based on our convictions, our understanding and our experiences. For example, when we see the sea, it can make us feel happy as it returns us to memories of childhood vacations, or it can scare us as we recall giant waves and angry skies. In a sense, both feelings about the sea are accurate, but deciding which one we experience is up to us.

The fact is that no matter how long these trials and blessings continue, they amount to no more than a moment compared to our eternal lives. It is our reaction to them, which stays with us over the long term and forms the basis of our everlasting happiness or punishment.

As such, a true blessing or trial is determined by our response to it, not by the occurrence itself. "Every soul shall taste death, and We will test you with good and ill by way of test, and to Us you will be brought back" (Quran 21:35)

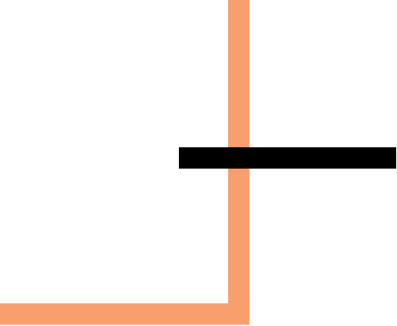


Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 13

Take ten minutes to find:

1. A Quranic verse indicating that God’s in laying down Sharia law was not to entrap people in hardship and difficulty, but to purify them and to perfect the grace bestowed upon them.
2. A Quranic verse indicating that God’s benevolence descends upon infidels and those caught up in scourges of the earthly world so that they may return to God by repentance from their shirk (polytheism) and arrogance.



“Indeed, those who fear Allah—when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight.” (Quran 7:201)

14

Why Satan?

Satan: The Challenge That Strengthens Faith

Explaining the theological wisdom behind the existence of Satan as a catalyst for spiritual growth.

Section 1: The Unexpected Role of Satan



A catalyst for spiritual growth

His provocations push humans to use reason and will to defend themselves.



Like a fortifying vaccine

His challenges strengthen the human spiritual "immune system" to resist temptation.



His authority is limited over Allah's servants

"Indeed, My servants - no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators".

Section 2: The Human Response and the Opportunity for Repentance

Disobedience is not the end of the story

One must look at a human holistically, taking into account their good deeds alongside their sins.



Sins are like vaccine symptoms

They are a sign of the self resisting temptation and open the door to seeking forgiveness and repentance.

Allah loves those who repent

"Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant"; sin and repentance are part of the believer's journey.



Certainly, the devil—without intending to do so—plays a supporting role in helping human beings reach the goal that Allah created them for. At the same time, Allah is mighty, kind and gentle; he gave us the heavens and the earth; he created the angels for our service and to prepare us for the lofty position, which He prepared for us, and he did not allow the devil to spoil his purpose. *“And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all from Him. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought”* (Quran 45:13)

The devil makes evil attempts to seduce people and deceive them by making what is bad look good. Contrary to what you might expect, this has made it possible for a large number of human beings to be morally better than they otherwise would have been. The reason for this is that their intellect, willpower, and the inherent power of their soul are primed to defend themselves and their lives in the world before the Hereafter.

The result is that most human beings become worthy of entering paradise. In a similar vein,

many of them achieve lofty positions that they would not have otherwise reached without Satan’s challenges and provocations.

This exposure is just like the vaccinations that we give our children. Vaccines introduce them to prepared bacteria, which strengthen their immune systems and fortify them against the diseases we expect them to encounter.

To continue the analogy, the mistakes and sins that humans occasionally commit are similar to the side effects of a vaccine, such as high temperature. Although these side effects are unpleasant, they occur because the children’s bodies are strengthening themselves against the disease. It is the same with our souls, experiencing discomfort as they build resistance against the temptations of the devil.

Indeed, Allah Almighty said to Satan: *“This is the path [leading] straight to Me. Indeed, My servants—no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators”*, when Satan said to Allah: *“My Lord! As You have consigned me to perversity,*

I will surely glamorize [evil] for them on the earth, and I will surely pervert them, all except Your exclusive servants among them.” (Quran 15: 39-42)

In his interpretation of these verses, Sayyed Tabatabai says, “Allah the Almighty says to Satan that verily My Servants, meaning human beings, you have no authority over them, and this is the rule. But your authority is an exception only to those who follow you among the deviators and those are the ones who have negative practices in their lives. They reach to an extent where they are known as “deviators.” Since they are deviators, they therefore follow you.”

It is wrong to judge others from a narrow perspective. Often, if someone has committed a forbidden act such as lying or listening to forbidden music, we automatically assume that Satan has taken control of them! We never bother to look at the good actions from which Satan was not able to distract them, even though in reality, they add up to more than their shortcomings. We do not look at the energy they expend on their studies, how

hard they work for their family, their service to the community, their kindness and cheerfulness, and many other positive aspects of their character. This would be like condemning a beautiful work of art as ugly because we choose to only see the few, small errors it contains.

It is reported in a Hadith that the companions of the Holy Prophet (PBUHF) said: “O Messenger of Allah, we are afraid of hypocrisy.” He (PBUHF) asked, “*And why are you afraid of that?*” They answered, “If we are with you and you remind us and arouse our desires such that we forget about the world, we become zealous as if we are seeing the paradise and hell in the Hereafter. However, as soon as we leave your presence and enter our houses, we take pride in our children and turn to our previous situation as if we had not experienced anything. Don’t you fear from us that indeed that is hypocrisy?”

The Holy Prophet (PBUHF) told them, “*No, these are footsteps of Satan to deceive you in the world. By God, if you continued with the situation that you have described, you would*

have certainly shaken hands with the angels, and you would have walked on water. And were it not for you that you sin, and then seek forgiveness from Allah, He would have created a creation that would sin then seek forgiveness from Allah and He would forgive them. Indeed, a believer gets tempted and repents. Haven't you heard the words of Allah the Almighty: 'Verily, Allah loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves.' (Surat Al-Baqarah, 222). He also said: 'Seek forgiveness from your Lord, then turn to Him.' (Surat Hud, 52)



Assessment Questions

Part One | Lesson 14

1. God strongly discourages us from following Satan's steps, because he is a clear enemy of man. Take seven minutes to find four Quranic verses that mention of the “steps of Satan”, naming the surah and the verse number.

Verse:.....
.....
.....
Surah Name:
Surah Number:

Verse:.....
.....
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Surah Name:
Surah Number:

Verse:.....
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Surah Name:
Surah Number:

Verse:.....
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Surah Name:
Surah Number:

A photograph of a woman wearing a light-colored hijab and a beige long-sleeved top. She is shown from the chest up, with her head tilted back and her hands raised in a gesture of prayer or supplication. The background is bright and out of focus. The right side of the image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent rectangle containing white text.

Part Three: Islamic Practices

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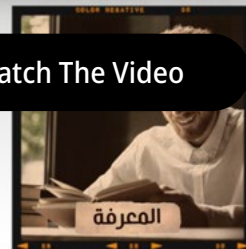
What Is Your Vision for Life?

“Whoever desires the reward of this world - then with Allah is the reward of this world and the Hereafter. And ever is Allah Hearing and Seeing.”
An-Nisa 4:134





▶ Watch The Video



■ What Is Your Vision for Life?



13:24

What is Your Goal in Life?

The Illusion of Common Goals

80%



Wealth Obsession

More than 80% of young people set wealth as a primary goal in their lives.

Money Doesn't Buy Happiness

Money does not create happiness once basic needs are met.



Success Addiction (The Success Race)

An endless race like drinking sea water; every achievement generates a thirst for a greater one, leading to inner emptiness.



Laws of True Happiness

The Most Important Factor for Happiness is Good Human Relationships

This is the main conclusion of the Harvard study that lasted 75 years.



Happiness is a Stable Internal State of Contentment and Tranquility

It differs from temporary joy; it is comprehensive satisfaction and self-actualization.



The Realistic Alternative (Contentment and Balance)

Aim for a decent life and direct your efforts toward what achieves sustainable tranquility.





Dr. Robert Waldinger — a physician and psychoanalyst at Harvard Medical School, and the director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development — mentions that a recent study conducted on millennials asked them about the most important goals in their lives. More than 80% responded that their primary goal in life was to become rich, and 50% said that their other main goal was to become famous.⁵

There can be no doubt that the majority of us move through this life in pursuit of happiness and tranquility. The question to be asked here is: are these the goals of humans according to the divine manual created for man, or are they no more than part of the greater goal we are to pursue and for which we were created?

Raphaël Badziag mentions in his book *The Billion Dollar Secret* that after six years of research and interviews with 21 self-made billionaires to answer the question “Are billionaires happy?”, he found that money in itself does not change a person’s ability to be happy — it merely amplifies their personality. In other words, happy people become happier,

⁵ <https://youtu.be/wGXSbZ7ipMk>

while unhappy people become more miserable when they become wealthy.

If money only brings misery to those who are already miserable by nature, then what harm is there in pursuing it, as long as it brings greater joy and enjoyment to those who know how to grasp happiness?⁶

A Harvard study conducted on 4,000 millionaires by Donnelly and Norton found that money contributes to happiness by meeting basic needs, but beyond a certain level, more money does not result in more happiness⁷.

On the other hand, accumulating wealth comes only with great difficulty and demands a tremendous investment of time, energy, and effort. It often means dedicating decades of one's life and working long hours throughout the week at the expense of one's personal and family life. It also means being unable to take vacations or enjoy leisure time, while bearing

enormous burdens of responsibility and stress.

All of this comes at the cost of the things that truly bring happiness, peace of mind, and inner calm — perhaps the most important of which are social relationships.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development — which has spanned over 75 years and focused on the physical and psychological aspects of two groups of participants totaling 724 people, as noted by its director, Dr. Robert Waldinger — revealed that what matters more than anything else is good relationships. Waldinger says: “The clearest message we get from this 75-year study is that good relationships keep us healthier and happier.” He adds, “Happiness isn’t about the number of conferences you’ve spoken at, the likes you’ve received on social media, the tech companies you’ve worked for, or the amount of effort you’ve put in.”

Waldinger continues, “More important than all of that, the greatest actual indicator of happiness in a person’s life is love.”⁸

6 Rafael Badziag, Contributor, Aug 31, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/traits-habits-that-make-billionaires-happy-2019-8>

7 <https://www.inc.com/peter-cohan/will-10-million-make-you-happier-harvard-says-yes-if-you-make-it-yourself-give-it-away.html>

8 <https://youtu.be/wGXSbZ7ipMk>

Worse still, when obsession with money, fame, or similar pursuits takes hold, it becomes an insatiable addiction — like drinking seawater: it never quenches thirst, but only makes one thirstier. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is reported to have said, “If the son of Adam had two valleys of wealth, he would seek a third.”

In contrast, all we truly need to feel content is to possess contentment itself — a trait that may be difficult for some to acquire, yet is far easier, by any measure, than the effort required to amass millions (assuming we succeed in doing so). We should instead strive to secure a decent standard of living that meets our basic human needs with dignity, without extravagance, waste, or excess, and dedicate the rest of our efforts to what truly fulfills our humanity and brings us genuine happiness.

Fallacious ideas and notions have contaminated even the notion of happiness, about whose desirability no two human beings would disagree. One might be tempted to think it is all relative, that happiness may

mean money to one person, fame to another, knowledge to a third person and compassion to a fourth. However, is it really like this? Is success relative? Is it different from one person to the next, or is there a rigid, existential and universal truth that determines how happiness can be achieved—much like the truth that thirst cannot be quenched with anything but water, and a hungry man cannot reach satiety without eating?

Many of us strive with all our might to achieve a success that seems within reach, and when we finally attain it, we feel neither happiness nor fulfillment. Instead, we begin chasing another success to quench our thirst and hunger for more. Thus, we keep leaping from one achievement to the next, yet the feeling of emptiness and thirst never leaves us — as if we were running after a mirage, until life slips away from our grasp.

The global proliferation of psychological disorders—and the widespread lack of happiness—is a clear indication that the cause of happiness is not a relative matter, but an external reality, and that our omission of it is

what has caused misery to spread and modern lives to be in such disarray.

In 2021, depression rates in the United States rose to 32.8% among American adults. Statistics from 2020 also showed that 21% of American adults suffer from a mental or psychological disorder⁹, and that one in every three young Americans (aged 18–25) suffers from a mental or psychological disorder, according to the same year's data¹⁰.

Just as thirst can only be quenched by fresh water—not by salt water—and hunger can only be satisfied by food, happiness and success too are governed by strict natural laws. To attain them, we must understand and submit to these natural principles, and that is what this book seeks to clarify and address.

Unlike most of human needs, the laws that govern happiness, peace of mind, and success extend to every aspect of a person's life—24 hours a day, seven days a week. They are

⁹ National Alliance on Mental Health, <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>

¹⁰ <https://www.nami.org/mhstats>



intertwined with all areas of life: sleep, wakefulness, work, family life, and more.

So, let us first understand what “the happiness we are seeking” truly is, in order to find the right path toward it and avoid falling prey to illusions and ready-made notions.

To begin with, we must clearly distinguish between happiness and joy. Happiness is not the opposite of sadness; rather, it is the opposite of misery. A person can be happy even while feeling sad.

Joy and sadness are temporary emotional states that arise as a result of external factors. You may feel joy when you achieve good results at work or school, receive a gift you like, or meet a beloved person after a long time. You may feel sadness when you hear distressing news or something similar.

These are instinctive human responses that occur spontaneously as the subconscious mind and personality interact with external events. Therefore, they are good indicators of one’s character and personal traits. They may be

considered negative if they reveal a weak or materialistic personality, or positive if they reflect a strong, generous, and noble character.

Happiness, on the other hand—as defined by Michael Argyle in *The Psychology of Happiness*—is “a feeling of contentment and fulfillment, peace of mind, self-realization, and a sense of joy, pleasure, and enjoyment—in short, an overall sense of satisfaction.”

The Qur’an says: “*On the Day it comes, no soul will speak except by His permission; some will be miserable and some will be happy.*” (Surah Hud, 11:105)¹¹.

“The happiness of everything lies in attaining the goodness that fulfills its purpose and brings it delight. For the human being—composed of body and soul—happiness lies in attaining the good that satisfies both his physical and spiritual capacities, bringing him pleasure and delight. Misery, on the other hand, is to be deprived of that good.”

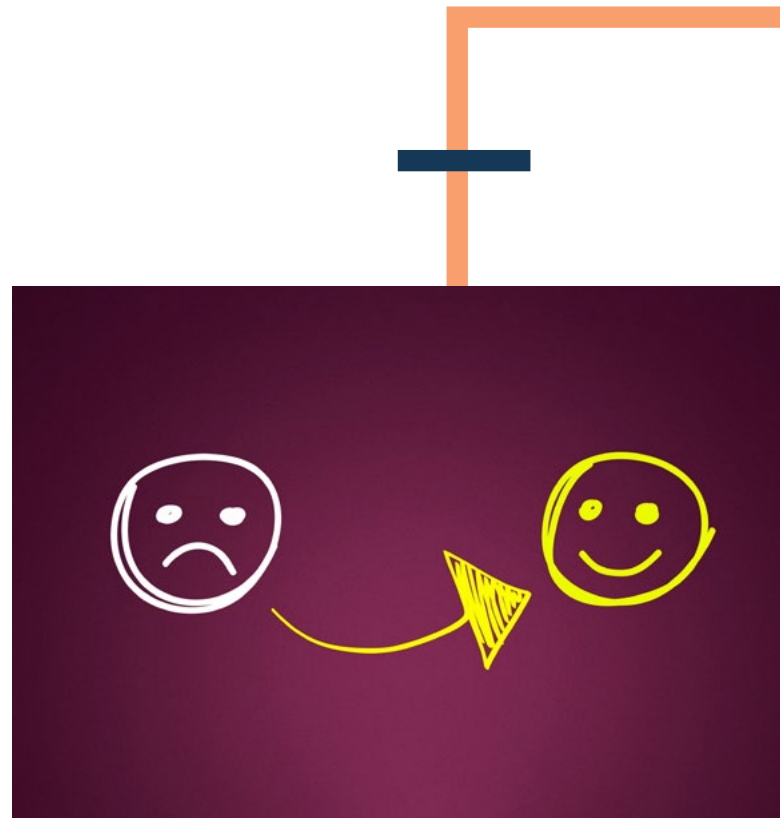
11 Al-Mizan: An Exegesis of the Qur’an

Happiness, therefore, is a deep, stable psychological state that develops gradually from a combination of internal and external factors as one moves through life. It is directly connected to the inner peace a person feels—the state of the tranquil soul.

As the Qur'an says: "O tranquil soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing." (Surah Al-Fajr, 89:27–28)

So how can a person achieve happiness and inner peace?

This is what we will explore in the coming lessons—but first, it is important to understand the complex interplay between reality and illusion in our lives, and how both influence our pursuit of happiness.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 15

1. Provide a verse from the Qur'an (other than the one mentioned in the lesson) that shows that the happy ones are the people of Paradise..

.....
.....

2. There are 25 verses in the Quran that show that the true victory is found in dutifully remaining on the path of God, and that this involves staying away from hell and entering paradise. Take five minutes to find 5 verses that are not mentioned in the chapter, naming the surah and the verse number.

16

Reality in Life

“Satan only makes them ‘false’ promises and deludes them with ‘empty’ hopes. Truly Satan promises them nothing but delusion.” (Surat An-Nisaa, 120)

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Watch The Video

المستوى من الواقعية

Reality in Life

10:25

Reality or Illusion? Your Guide to a Real Life

Many of our beliefs that shape our lives are built on illusions, while true success comes from understanding reality as it is.

Reality



Meaning, peace, and inner fulfillment.



Its source: fixed truths and reflection.



Its signs: searching for real value.



The result: strength, tranquility, and inner expansion.

Illusion



Temporary pleasure and a mirage.



Its source: the ego, desires, and the decoration of Satan.



Its signs: attachment to numbers, positions, and appearances.



The result: loss, pain, and tightness in life.



The Greatest Hidden Reality

God is the highest reality

Not just an idea, but the absolute truth that grants strength and deep happiness.

Steps Toward Realism



Start by reflecting on the universe and the self.



Review your decisions and their consequences.



Return to the Holy Quran and supplications.

There is no doubt that our established convictions control our views and behavior in life and dictate, to a large extent, our happiness or misery. “Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘Everyone acts in their own way.” (Surat al-Israa, 84)

However, to what extent does illusion overlap with reality in forming our convictions? Is our reality simple, or does it have multiple layers? This lesson will discuss this subject.

Dr. Bruce Lipton¹² mentioned that over a third of medications that are given for treatment are ineffective, but they nonetheless help with the cure, just because the patient believes it will work and cure them. This is known in the field of medicine as “the placebo effect,” and it shows the power of ideas and beliefs, even if they are fictitious and false.

In addition, this applies to both negative and positive ideas. Dr. Bruce Lipton mentioned that if you believed you were ill, then you would feel its effects, and you might even die, despite its nonexistence.

Illusion and Reality

The truth about many of our pressing needs in life is that they are simply illusions or distorted facts, whether these be related to desires, emotions or reactions.

This deceptive appearance is the work of the evil-enjoining self and the seduction of Satan, and is precisely why Allah commanded us to consider Satan an enemy: “[Satan] said, ‘My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all...” (15:39), and also in “Whom Allah has cursed. For he had said, ‘I will surely take from among Your servants a specific portion (118) And I will mislead them, and I will arouse in them [sinful] desires, and I will command them so they will slit the ears of cattle, and I will command them

¹² Dr. Bruce Harold Lipton, an American developmental biologist.

so they will change the creation of Allah ." And whoever takes Satan as an ally instead of Allah has certainly sustained a clear loss (119) Satan promises them and arouses desire in them. But Satan does not promise them except delusion (120)" (4:118-120).

When we see children making desperate efforts to win at videogames, as if they were a matter of life or death, we feel they are being childish. And yet, what they are doing is no different from wealthy people chasing even more wealth, and we glorify them!

Illusion is the driver that makes millionaires dissatisfied because they aren't yet billionaires. They are seduced into struggling to put an extra zero on the end of their bank balance with the same blind desperation as the child who pursues higher scores in a videogame. Neither of those numbers has real value. Both are following illusions.

It is illusion that makes our hearts race when we bump into a celebrity or public figure. In a similar vein, it is illusion that makes us wear expensive brands to show off our self-worth:

"They are not but [mere] names you have named them—you and your forefathers—for which Allah has sent down no authority. They follow not except assumption and what [their] souls desire, and there has already come to them from their Lord guidance..." (53:23).

In fact, even our perceptions of our desires are distorted by illusion. A man's perception of sexual desire, for instance, is greatly amplified by his mental image of sex as a symbol of manhood and virility, and because we as humans submit to the notion that sex gives one unimaginable and unparalleled pleasure.

This is what Satan wants us to succumb to, and this is what Allah warns us against: "Say, [O Muhammad], "Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? (103) [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work (104)" (18:103-104), and "Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then

it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion" (57:20).

The reason it is important to realize this truth is that despite what we may wish or feel, reality will continue to be reality. Similarly, illusion will not become real, simply because we imagine it to be so. We can imagine that fire is cold for as long as we want, but it will remain hot regardless, and if we place a hand in it, it will burn us, no matter how we try to delude ourselves otherwise.

Levels of reality

Our perception and knowledge of reality enable us to approach life in a wise and balanced way, so we may enjoy it fully and minimize our pain and suffering.

However, reality does not exist at a single level; rather, it comes in multiple levels and layers. In order to maximize our happiness and joy in life,

we must be able to comprehend these various levels and handle them accordingly.

To better understand this concept, imagine you are relaxing on your bed, in your room, on a ship full of tourists in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Your bed and blanket are the closest forms of material reality to you at this moment. At this particular level of reality, your comfort is determined by the softness and coziness of your bed and blanket.

Your second level of reality is your room. At this level, the spaciousness, luxuriousness and tidiness of the room are what will determine your happiness. If your room smelled bad, your cozy mattress would not help to alleviate your discomfort in this regard.

Your third level of reality is the ship, the fourth is the ocean in which the ship is sailing, and the fifth is the Earth, and so on.

Now imagine that your ship is the Titanic, the greatest and most luxurious ship of its time. You feel happy and safe, especially with the delusional idea that the ship is "unsinkable".

I am willing to bet that all the happiness you would feel at being aboard such a ship would not equal a fraction of the pain and suffering you would have gone through if you were among the great majority who died in the frigid water when it hit the iceberg.

The ship's crew was not aware of the iceberg because it was at the fourth level of reality, the ocean, and because of the commonly held delusion that the ship was unsinkable.

If the crew had been attentive and had not submitted to the grandiose delusion of the unsinkable ship, they may have been able to spot the iceberg in time and avoid the collision. The crew needed to break free of their illusion, see reality in order to save those innocent souls, and maintain their happiness.

Let us imagine that this is indeed, what happened, and that the Titanic sailed on as intended. But the unfortunate ship could still have been sunk by something else — a tsunami for instance, or a comet strike — which is admittedly unlikely but not impossible nevertheless, because these are events at the fifth level of reality.



We cannot perceive this level of reality and prepare for its events easily, but that does not change the fact that it exists; it surrounds us and, whether we like it or not, it affects us directly.

Let us now look at the outermost layers of reality. The sixth level would be the solar system, the seventh level the Milky Way galaxy, and the eighth level the entire universe. All these levels are ones over which we cannot exert any influence, and therefore, we ignore them.

The next level of reality surrounds the whole universe, but affects us directly, perpetually and significantly during our lives. We also affect it more than anything else around us does. It is closer to us than our first level of material reality. We call this level “the realm of the unseen”.

The unseen realms to which we will eventually move include the “Al Barzakh” (purgatory) and “Hereafter” realms and they are real and existing worlds that surround us. We shape our fate in them directly through our will and our interactions in this life. We are soon to meet those worlds, and this is a fact we cannot ignore or afford to forget, unless we are simply fools.

Imagine that someone takes a plane to another country and purposefully does not take their passport with them. This would be foolish, because they would not even be admitted to the plane, let alone their destination.

Similarly, we are headed towards the heavens and shall soon find ourselves at the gates. If we do not have our “passports” with us, we will not be allowed in.

There is a reality that is more real still than all of that, one in which place and time do not apply, and which is closer to us than we are to ourselves. That reality is Allah: “...and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein...” (50:16).

Allah is reality; reality is Allah. We are merely his manifestations and creatures, so how could we be blind to his presence? Reflect on this part of the supplication of Imam Hussain on the day of Arafat: “How can You be figured out through that whose existence relies on You? Can anything other than You hold a (kind of) manifestation that You lack? and thus it may act as an appearance for You? When have You ever been absent so that You may need something to point to You? When have You ever been far-off so that traces may lead to You?”

In the story of the Righteous Servant (Al-Khodr) with the Prophet Moses (AS), “I did not do it all on my own.” (Surat Al-Kahf, 82), it is clearly shown that Allah’s will and care for His creation and their needs, as well as protecting them from evil things, really exist. It frequently occurs without a miracle occurring to demonstrate that divine intervention is a natural part of what

happens in the world and that Allah's intervention drives the world in the direction of its true goal, in accordance with the laws that He, Exalted be He, established for it. "Whoever desires this fleeting world 'alone', We hasten in it whatever We please to whoever We will; then We destine them for Hell, where they will burn, condemned and rejected. But whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it accordingly, and is a 'true' believer, it is they whose striving will be appreciated." (Surat Al-Israa, 18-19)

Our lack of attention to this reality causes us to overlook the value of the most beautiful and greatest things available to us. It deprives us of enjoying their pleasure and savoring their greatness, which is why we unwittingly move away from them.

Why else would we overlook the magnificence and grandness of real—not illusory—contact with the absolute power, beauty, and greatness of Allah?

How else could it be that our ongoing communication with Allah and Allah's communication with us do not give us happiness,

power and tranquility? Allah is existence itself; He is the beauty, the grandeur; He is capable of everything, and He created us and everything else, and He loves us very much: "Blind be the eye that cannot see You watching it and losing is a servant's deal that does not dedicate a share to the love for You." ["Supplication" of Imam Hussein (p) on the day of Arafa].

Why else would it be that we do not enjoy and savor the magnificence of the relationship with the greatest apostle Mohammed (PBUHF) and his household, whom Allah has made the path to Him?

Our realization and understanding of this reality, and our interaction with it on the basis of it being real, is what changes our lives totally in this life and the Hereafter and gives them a special meaning and flavor beyond any imagination. This is what the greatest apostle called for in his supplications: "O Allah, do not make this life the greatest of our concerns, nor the pinnacle of our knowledge..."; similarly, in the saying of imam Ali: "Work for your life as if you will live forever, and work for your hereafter as if you will die tomorrow."

The way to Allah is nothing other than our capacity to perceive this reality, understand it, and deal with it in the firm conviction that it is real. The Prophet said that, “Who knows himself, knows his God.” (Al Bihar, 2/32).

The most effective mechanism for developing our ability to distinguish what is real from what is not is continuous observation of, and continuous reflection upon the universe and existence, on the human social relationships around you or within yourself, on the feelings and emotions that these bring up, and on the resulting behaviors, outcomes and decisions that arise.

Since most of the reality around us is of the ghaib type (unseen/unknown), and since the knowledge of man is limited—“And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little” (17:85)—we are unable to perceive reality without the help of the great Quran and the supplications narrated by credible sources from among the apostles and the imams of Ahl al-Bâit.

To conclude this chapter, I want to highlight the following great verses from the chapter Al

Qasas, which discusses the concept of reality in a very expressive manner in its narration of the tale of Qarun: “So he came out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the worldly life said, “Oh, would that we had like what was given to Qarun. Indeed, he is one of great fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said, “Woe to you! The reward of Allah is better for he who believes and does righteousness. And none are granted it except the patient. And We caused the earth to swallow him and his home. And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor was he of those who [could] defend themselves. And those who had wished for his position the previous day began to say, “Oh, how Allah extends provision to whom He wills of His servants and restricts it! If not that Allah had conferred favor on us, He would have caused it to swallow us. Oh, how the disbelievers do not succeed! That home of the Hereafter We assign to those who do not desire exaltedness upon the earth or corruption. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous” (28:79-83).



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 16

1. There are many Quranic verses that emphasize the fact that the life of the earthly world (al-Dunya) is distraction, illusion and deception, and that the real world and reality is beyond the earthly world (the realms of the unseen), including the verse in the lesson.

Aside from these, however, there are two verses in the Quran where God addresses his people directly and alerts them to this fact and warns them of the danger of being ignorant of it. Take ten minutes to find these two verses, naming the surah and the verse number.

Verse:.....
.....
.....
Surah Name:
Surah Number:

Verse:.....
.....
.....
Surah Name:
Surah Number:





“O humanity! Indeed, you are labouring restlessly towards your Lord, and will ‘eventually’ meet the consequences” (Surat Al-Inshiqaq, 3)

17

The Path to Allah



 The Path to Allah

 Watch The Video

مطره الإنسان

هي الباعث الحقيقي وراء

الرغبة في الابتكار والإبداع

12:19

The Journey to Allah: A Roadmap to True Tranquility



Body



Heart



Mind



Soul

True happiness is the harmony of the four dimensions

It is achieved when body needs, heart feelings, mind thoughts, and soul's nature align.

The Essence and Concept of the Journey

Journeying to Allah is being honest with oneself

It is a journey to rectify the inner self and increase harmony, which generates strength, contentment, and tranquility.



The legislative approach (Sharia)

The cosmic approach (Laws of the Universe)

The Practical Path and Results

Two integrated divine approaches to the journey

Success in the journey requires combining the legislative approach (Sharia) and the cosmic approach (Laws of the Universe).

Practical Steps to Start the Journey



Start by rectifying beliefs



And practicing what enhances natural disposition (Fitra)



And avoiding what disturbs it

The Result of the True Journey

Total Liberation

Liberation from fear, anxiety, and self-servitude to reach true strength, beauty, and greatness.



Repeating the question we asked before: "What is our purpose in life?" and how does a person achieve happiness and calmness?

Happiness and calmness are two sides of the same coin, and they express how honest a person is with himself or herself. In other words, how coherent are their actions and behaviors that arise from their seeking their natural desires and needs (their body), with their feelings and emotions (their heart), their ideas, knowledge and beliefs in life (their mind) and their soul and nature that Allah granted them (the soul).

The search for truth (and the love of searching for it) and the adoption of great manners, the seeking of perfection in all its forms, creativity, innovation, and the search for love and belonging all arise from the nature Allah endowed humans with and from the fact that humans are comprised of a soul and a body. "Remember, O Prophet¹ when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a human being from sounding clay moulded from black mud"¹³. So when I have fashioned him and had



a spirit of My Own 'creation' breathed into him, fall down in prostration to him.'" (Surat Al-Hijr, 28-29). As such, the natural elements of humanity incline us towards nature and tie us to it, but the metaphysical elements of humanity tie us to the metaphysical world.

Part of this human nature is the drive towards and admiration for perfection, elevation and greatness, which drive us to adopt Allah's manners as our own and strive towards Him and His proximity, Exalted is He. "So be

13 Fitrah: Man's Natural Disposition, by Murtadha Mutahhari

steadfast in faith in all uprightness 'O Prophet'—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in 'all' people. Let there be no change in this creation of Allah. That is the Straight Way, but most people do not know." (Surat Ar-Rum, 30).

The path to attaining happiness and calmness, and benefiting from these states, lies in following and seeking perfection on the path of self-honesty – the path to Allah – until a person attains the rank of the saints. As each of the four aspects contained in a human (body, mind, heart and soul) become more harmonious with each other and as a person's personality becomes simpler, stronger, calmer, greater and more satisfied with its proximity to Allah, a person becomes more of a saint (or person of truth). At this stage, there is no difference between all 4 aspects, and they are fully harmonized and synchronized with each other. "And mention in the Book 'O Prophet, the story of' Abraham. He was surely a man of truth and a prophet." (Surat Maryam, 41).

But how can striving towards more self-honesty be the path to Allah?

Allah, Exalted is He, said: "We made the day and night as two signs. So We made the sign of the night devoid of light, and We made the sign of the day 'perfectly' bright, so that you may seek the bounty of your Lord" (Surat Al-Israa, 12). Allah made two systems that are intrinsically linked and complete each other, through which we can attain self-honesty and improve it until we attain eternal bliss. One path is a legal system which is the Islamic Sharia, and the other is formative, where He made the night to be dark so that we can find calmness in it and made the day to be bright, so we can strive and seek our sustenance, security and needs, and this is described as "the bounty of Allah".

To attain your existential purpose, which is to attain proximity to Allah, worship Him, and obtain happiness, strength and calmness, you

have to unite both systems in full force. Just as you cannot win a football match without playing it well, in accordance with its rules, you also cannot win in this life, as long as you do not live it in accordance with the Divine legislation. However, if you do, Allah's satisfaction is right in front of you.

Striving towards the path of self-honesty and elevation only depends on you correcting your beliefs and ideas about life, so they become harmonious and coherent with your nature, and you have to apply the actions that reinforce these correct beliefs and ideas and avoid the actions that disturb them. You must also protect yourself by seeking out Allah's allies and distancing yourself from Allah's enemies, sterilizing your environment from whatever you can remove, be it at the physical or emotional level, and carrying out good actions. *"By the 'passage of' time! Surely humanity is in 'grave' loss, except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance."* (Surat Al-Asr, 1-3)

And contemplate Allah's Words, Exalted is He: *"Allah is the Guardian of the believers—He*

brings them out of darkness and into light. As for the disbelievers, their guardians are false gods who lead them out of light and into darkness. It is they who will be the residents of the Fire. They will be there forever." (Surat Al-Baqarah, 257). Allah is the Light of the Heavens and the Earth.

Reaching the status of sainthood means liberating yourself from all the chains that surround you and from all the darkness and negative emotions, like depression, fear and worrying, and as well as weakness. You have to liberate yourself from self-worship and nothing in this world, no matter how big or small, should have any effect on you. You should be a devout servant of Allah, Exalted is He, in your entirety, and you should devote yourself to Him, in order to attain the essence of greatness, strength, and beauty – and that is the very definition of worshipping Allah, Exalted is He, as we described in the lesson regarding what it means to attain proximity to Allah.

In Imam Ali's Al-Munajat Ash-Sha'baniya, he said: *"My Lord, (please) grant me absolute devotion to You and illumine the vision of our*

hearts by the light of their gaze looking towards You until the vision of our hearts pierces the curtains of light to reach the core of supremacy, and that our souls become suspended by the majesty of Your Holiness.”

In our previous lesson, “What does it mean to attain proximity to Allah?” we mentioned that we need to work on two aspects to improve the level of our complete servitude to Allah, Exalted is He. These two aspects are: how devoted we are to Allah (which is defined by the skills, characteristics and existential traits that we have) and the second is how aware we are of this devotion, explicitly and implicitly, with mental or emotional knowledge and with our behavior.

In order to attain this, Allah created the universe in a dualistic system of death and life, “He is the One Who created death and life” (Surat Al-Mulk, 2) and of excess and absence “and made darkness and light.” (Surat Al-Anaam, 1), and evil and goodness, where He said: “And We test you O humanity with good and evil as a trial, then to Us you will all be returned.” (Surat Al-Anbiya, 35), in order to create movement in this life that drives humanity, automatically,

through their strife and actions in this life, towards perfection, improvement and proximity to Allah, Exalted is He. “O humanity! Indeed, you are laboring restlessly towards your Lord, and will eventually meet the consequences.” (Surat Al-Inshiqaq, 6), in order to become better versions of ourselves “in order to test which of you is best in deeds” and to drive us from the darkness to the light” (Surat Al-Baqarah, 257).

In order to hasten this process in life to achieve this great purpose and message, Allah, Exalted is He, created us “from a male and a female” and he made us “peoples and tribes” (Surat Al-Hujarat, 257) and He said: “If Allah had willed, He would have made you one community, but His Will is to test you with what He has given each of you.” (Surat al-Maidah, 48), and He gave preference to some of us above others, “and [He] elevated some of you in rank over others, so He may test you with what He has given you.” (Surat Al-Anaam, 165) and He created us “in the best form” (Surat at-Tin, 4), in all four of our aspects (body, mind, heart and soul). “So when I have fashioned him and had a spirit of My Own creation breathed into him” (Surat Al-Hijr, 29),

in order to allow us to benefit from this strife and duality in life around us and within us. “And by the soul and ‘the One’ Who fashioned it, then with ‘the knowledge of’ right and wrong inspired it!” (Surat Ash-Shams, 8) in order to improve and attain perfection and proximity to Allah, Exalted and Glorified is He.

He also provided us everything that is in the universe to aid us, “He ‘also’ subjected for you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all by His grace.” (Surat Al-Jathiya, 13), and He made everything on Earth a decoration to drive us towards Him in this life, and to create the passion in our lives in order for us to strive towards Him with more dedication. “We have indeed made whatever is on earth as an adornment for it, in order to test which of them is best in deeds.” (Surat Al-Kahf, 7) and then He ordered us to act diligently in this life. “He is the One Who smoothed out the earth for you, so move about in its regions and eat from His provisions. And to Him is the resurrection ‘of all’.” (Surat Al-Mulk, 15), in order to attain our servitude to Allah, and be fully obedient to Him, “I did not create jinn and humans except to worship Me.” (Surat Adh-Dhariyat, 56). Through

this worship, we can obtain the highest level of perfection and proximity to Him, Glorified is He, and as such, we can deserve being Allah’s viceregents on this Earth. ‘Remember’ when your Lord said to the angels, “I am going to place a successive ‘human’ authority on earth.” (Surat Al-Baqarah, 30).

And since we are strategic stakeholders in this strategy and we are the main executors, Allah has not kept it hidden from us. On the contrary, He clearly stated the strategy in His Holy Book and He commanded us to strive towards this strategy with all our might: “Flee to Allah!” (Surat adh-Dhariyat, 50), and to race towards Him, Exalted is He. “And the foremost ‘in faith’ will be the foremost ‘in Paradise’. They are the ones nearest ‘to Allah’, in the Gardens of Bliss.” (Surat Al-Waqiah, 10-11). We should also compete and strive diligently when it comes to this, “So let whoever aspires to this strive ‘diligently’.” (Surat Al-Mutaffifin, 26), in order to attain success and great victory. “and what will make you realize what ‘Illyûn’ is? — a fate ‘already’ sealed, witnessed by those nearest ‘to Allah’.” (Surat al-Mutaffifin, 19-21), “That is ‘truly’ the ultimate triumph.” (Surat at-Taubah, 72).

Axes of the Path to God

For the purpose of our movement towards Allah, Islam outlines four interlinking categories of activities. Balanced practice of these activities in line with Islamic doctrines, human instinct and mental guidance's will lead us ever closer to Allah, with the eventual goal of reaching pure devotion to Him. These categories are:

Fulfillment of our physical and psychological needs in a balanced and moderate fashion:

"Say: Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision? Say: They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection. Thus, do We detail the verses for a people who know." (Quran 7:32); "It is He who made the earth tame for you—so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision—and to Him is the resurrection." (Quran 67:15)



 Axes of the Path to God

 Watch The Video

فكذلك السير إلى الله يخلصنا
من الآلام النفسية والعقلية
بأشكالها وأنواعها
ويملأنا سعادةً وحبوراً



7:31

Development of our knowledge and capacities:

“O, you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed.” (Quran 5:35); “Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know.” (Quran 2:151)

Self-denial for the sake of Allah through the culture of generosity and virtue for humanity:

“Never will you attain the good [reward] until you spend [in the way of Allah] from that which you love. And whatever you spend - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it.” (Quran 3:92); “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah.” (Quran 3:110)

Remembrance and worship of Allah:

“And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed.” (Quran 62:10)

Laying down the system of Sharia in the form of these four categories was only the first step— Allah also established numerous mechanisms and practices to guide us through our required tasks. The Almighty said: “This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion.” (Quran 5:3). Even before that, Allah created us and the cosmos in a way that would spontaneously lead us to Him. “And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth—all from Him” (Quran 45:13). This applies unless we, as humans, willingly choose to deviate from the path of divine grace.

The Path to Allah: 4 Pillars in Your Daily Life

The Fruits of Journeying to Allah

An enjoyable journey like physical exercise

It begins with self-struggle, then becomes delightful, enjoyable, and indispensable.



Psychological tranquility and positive energy

Getting rid of negative emotions like anxiety and sadness, and feeling happiness and strength.



1. Balanced fulfillment of needs

Moderate pursuit to meet physical and psychological requirements without excess or negligence.



2. Self-development and knowledge

Continuous work on developing personal capabilities and increasing knowledge and skills.



3. Remembrance and worship of Allah

The core pillar that connects all other pillars, represented in constant connection with Allah.



4. Giving and reform

Establishing a culture of giving, selflessness, serving others, and spreading goodness in society.

That Path that Leads to Allah

The number of potential applications of this general outline—and the number of roads leading to Allah—are as numerous as the breaths of all the people in the world. Every individual is uniquely made up of strengths and weaknesses, potential and inherited traits, and each of us has a different environment and challenges to face. Different personality traits mean that each of us adopts different practices to draw closer to Allah—“and to do righteousness of which You approve” (27:19)

But what I want to stress here is that although the path to Allah requires self-discipline, it is also enjoyable and pleasurable. We have already noted that many of us suffer from anxiety, undue fear, sadness, depression, frustration, and despair. The path to Allah helps us banish adverse emotions and feel replete with energy, power, and happiness in this life and the Hereafter.

Movement towards Allah is much like physical exercise; at first, we feel it is very difficult, but we soon get used to it and start to enjoy it. Exhausting as it may be, we soon start to feel we cannot do without it. Consider the supplication of Imam Ali Zain al Abideen: “My God, who can have tasted the sweetness of Thy love, then wanted another in place of Thee? Who can have become intimate with Thy nearness, then sought removal from Thee?”

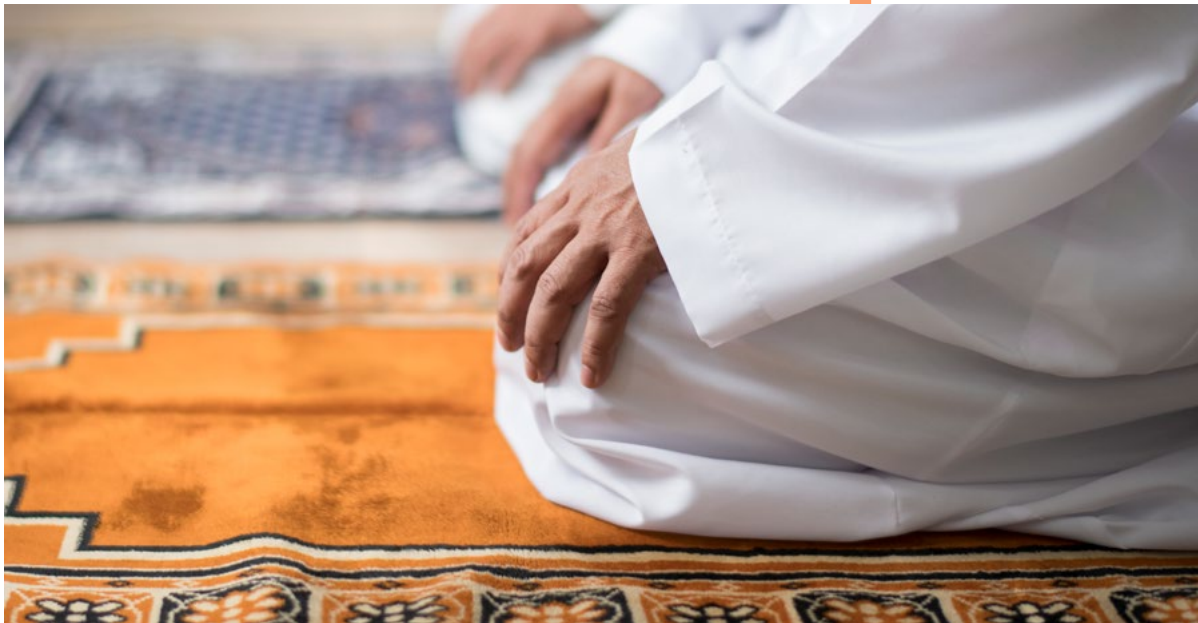
Just as physical exercise helps us to maintain our health and strengthen our bodies, movement towards Allah helps us to maintain our souls and minds banish psychological and mental “aches” and fill ourselves with happiness and bliss.

The good thing is that we, as Muslims, are already doing a big part of the work by practicing prayer, fasting, alms, and religious rituals. With just a small measure of additional awareness, we can multiply the outcomes of the religious practices we are already carrying out.

But back to our central question: How can we improve ourselves such that we embody pure devotion to Allah?

We mentioned previously that in order to raise ourselves to the level of full devotion to Allah, we need to work on two elements: first, our level of servitude to Allah (as embodied by our faculties, skills, capacities, and existential attributes), and second, our degree of awareness and perception of this servitude—consciously and subconsciously, intellectually, emotionally, and behaviorally.

In the following chapters, we shall discuss how we can use these two elements in a way that is not only compatible with the busy daily life of a hard-working individual but also improves our performance and helps us achieve happiness and tranquility.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 17

Take ten minutes to select the most appropriate axis of our path to God for each of the following legal verses:

- 1. "And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, saying, "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude. "" (Quran 76:8-9)
.....
- 2. "It is He who made the earth tame for you, so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision—and to Him is the resurrection." Surah Al-Mulk 67:15
.....
- 3. "Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves, reciting to you Our verses, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching

you that which you did not know." Surah Al-Baqarah 2:151
.....

- 4. "They love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their breasts of what the emigrants were given but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful." (Quran 56:9)
.....
- 5. It is said that the Great Prophet (PBUHF) returned from war and told his companions: "We have returned from the small jihad to the great jihad." They asked him, "What is the greatest jihad?" "The jihad of the soul," he replied.
.....

6. "Never will you attain righteousness until you spend from that which you love." Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:92

.....

7. "And when you have completed your rites, remember Allah like your [previous] remembrance of your fathers or with [much] greater remembrance." (Quran 2:200)

.....

8. "O you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means of nearness to Him, and strive in His cause that you may succeed." Surah Al-Mā'idah 5:35

.....

9. "O children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess. Say, "Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?" Say, "They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on

the Day of Resurrection." Thus do We detail the verses for a people who know." (Quran 7:31-32)

.....

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

.....

11. "You are the best nation produced for mankind: you enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah." Surah Āl 'Imrān 3:11

.....

12. "O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship." (Quran 2:172)

.....

13. "And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed." Surah Al-Jumu'ah 62:10

.....

14. "Then eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And be grateful for the favor of Allah, if it is [indeed] Him that you worship." (Quran 16:114)

.....

15. "But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge." (Quran 79:40-41)

.....

16. "Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good things of provision?' Say, 'They are for those who believe during the worldly life, exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection.'" Surah Al-A'raf 7:32

.....

18

Principles of the Path to Allah

“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you...” Al ‘Imran 3:31



Principles of Journeying to Allah

The Essence of the Path: Love for Allah ignites the journey, trust stabilizes it, balance preserves it, sincerity multiplies its impact, and kindness prevents quitting.

The Foundation: Love and Trust



Desires and heedlessness

Love for Allah is the Primary Motive

It is an innate drive, but it may be obscured by desires and heedlessness.



Trust in Allah is Accepting His Guidance Even in Trials

Trust means tranquility while exerting effort, not passive reliance.

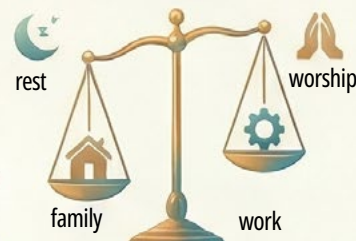


Gratitude Generates Love

Realizing that Allah is the source of all blessings makes worship a joy and happiness.



Practice: Balance, Sincerity, and Kindness



Balance Protects the Journey from Interruption

Balance is necessary between worship, work, family, and rest.

Sincerity Multiplies Impact and Proximity

A small deed with sincerity may outweigh a large deed without it.



Self-Kindness Prevents Quitting

Overburdening the soul with excessive enthusiasm leads to boredom and regression.

The Motivation to March towards Allah: ‘Loving Allah’

One of the greatest intuitive motives we have is to love Allah and galvanizing ourselves to serve and worship Him. “So be steadfast in faith in all uprightness ‘O Prophet’—the natural Way of Allah which He has instilled in ‘all’ people.” (Surat Ar-Rum, 30). It is because of our inadequate ability to discern what is real in the immediate material world and to be wise to our animal desires, lusts, and the temptations of Satan, that we may not be able to feel this motive clearly enough. However, this motive is reflected in our psyche in the form of various spiritual motives, like our affinity for perfection, strength, kindness and beauty, and our love for the allies of Allah on account of their proximity to Allah.

At the same time, alternative manifestations of these spiritual motives may tend towards the materialistic side, such as our love of money, status, and authority. This is because

we are used to the materialistic paradigm, and filter our feelings to suit this paradigm. Those with a noble psyche remain firmly attached to the spiritual motives and only moderately attached to the material ones.

This explains why it is so important to be able to discern what is real in our lives. The strength of our drive and motivation to move towards Allah is determined by our level of knowledge about Allah, our realization of the fact that He is the source of perfection, power, existence, and generosity. In addition, we understand that the whole universe and we are characterized by nothing but inherent insufficiency: “O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy” (35:15). These traits also aid in the gradual removal of materialistic barriers (like the love of money and status) and spiritual barriers (like the idolization of perfection and beauty) so that there remains nothing but the love of Allah and the desire to get closer to Him. This is how the statement of Imam Ali—“I never saw anything without seeing Allah before and after it, with and in it”—applies to us.

Allah's is our master, and this is not a virtual claim, as is the case with all that is owned in this world. The true and unique ownership results from Him being our Creator from nothingness.. He is the Creator and owner of everything that exists, as well as the bounty we receive. That is why our nature drives us to praise and thank Him all the time. [“O¹ descendants of those We carried with Noah² in the Ark³!”](#) He was indeed a grateful servant.” (Surat Al-Israa, 3).

This state of thanking and praising Allah obliges us to love Him, Exalted is He, and allows us to rejoice in our state of servitude and obedience to Him. In this manner, worshipping Allah is a source of happiness and enjoyment, and it does not place a heavy burden on humanity.

In Nahj al-Balagha, Imam Ali said, [“The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement \(knowledge\) of Him, the perfection of acknowledging Him is faith in Him, the perfection of faith in Him is oneness in Him, and the perfection of oneness in Him is devotion to Him.”](#)

The first principle on the path to Allah is to sense and feel the love of Allah in our hearts, to sense His majesty and beauty and to feel as much of a longing for Him as possible. The more passion we have to get closer to Him, the better the results will be.

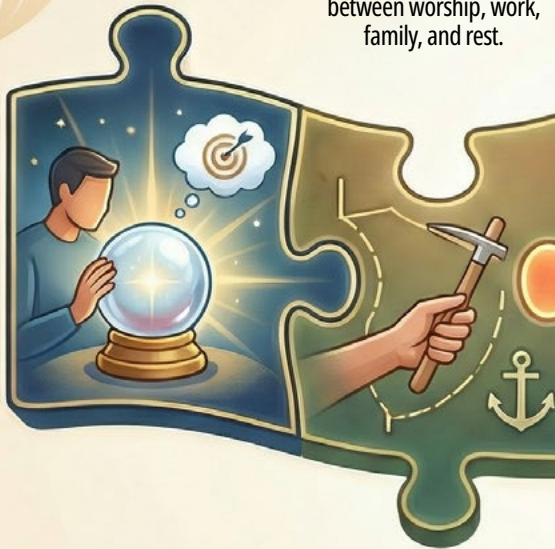
This knowledge and longing can be attained by seeking knowledge, practicing meditation, and living life with a positive attitude that aligns with the Islamic path.

I want to emphasize that the motivation to move towards Allah does not contradict or compete with the rest of the motives that drive us in our practice of living. Rather, they work synergistically; one leads to the other, and one is accomplished with the help of the other.

An Alternative to “Self-Confidence”: Strength of the Heart and Inner Tranquility

Step 1

Begin with objective knowledge, not illusion.

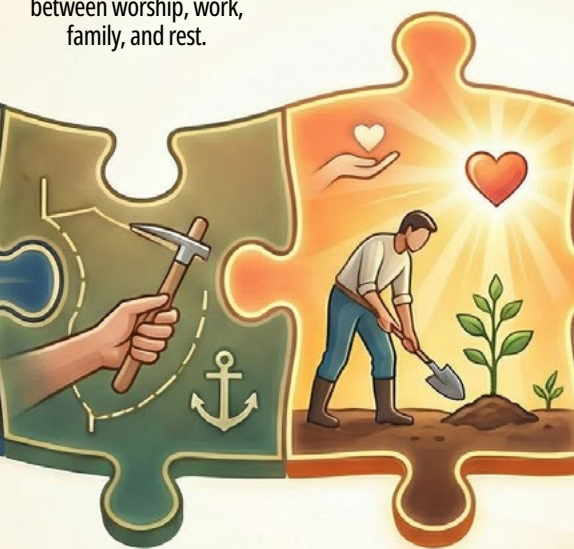


Know yourself (your strengths and weaknesses) and define your goals clearly; acting without insight only distances you further.

Step 2

Recognize the limits of your ability

Balance is necessary between worship, work, family, and rest.



Having ability does not guarantee results; absolute reliance on oneself creates inner fragility.

Step 3

Take the necessary means and rely with your heart upon God.



Combine developing your abilities with taking the necessary means while placing your trust in God alone; this grants you determination and steadfastness.

Step 4

Be humble before God in gratitude for His blessings.

Remember that every ability is a gift from God, which cultivates gratitude and responsibility instead of arrogance.



Step 5

Be humble toward people and never belittle anyone.

The measure of honor before God is piety alone, not worldly achievements.



**Knowledge + Means + Trust (in God) + Humility
+ Humility before God + Humility toward people
= A strong heart and unshakable tranquility.**

This integrated framework is the foundation of steadfast resolve and inner strength that hardships cannot defeat.

Faith and trust in Allah:

Motion to move towards Allah is not a passive process in one direction, but an interactive one that starts with Allah. He initiates it with love and attraction. In the supplication of Abi Hamza, the imam says, “I knew of You by You, and You directed me to You and called me to You, and without You I would not have known what You are.” When we respond by working to get closer to Allah, Allah continues to guide us and draw us towards him with an intensity that far exceeds our efforts in advancing towards God: “And those who strive for Us—We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good” (29:69).

Our love of Allah is what largely determines our practices in regard to Allah: “Say, [O Muhammad], “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you” (3:31), where our devotion to Allah determines how much Allah will draw and guide us to Him. Our faith in Allah is largely what determines our willingness and capacity to let in Allah’s guidance and acquiesce to His pull. This pull may sometimes take the form of ordeals and calamities whose reasons we may not understand: “And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient (155) Who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed we belong to Allah,



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وهذا الامتنان والشكر لله
يوجبان محبته سبحانه وتعالى
ويجعلاننا نلتذ بعبوديتنا
وخضوعنا لله سبحانه وتعالى،
وبذلك تصبح العبودية لله
مصدر سعادة ولذة وليست عبئاً

■ Principles of the Path to Allah - Loving Allah

5:50

and indeed to Him we will return' (156) Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided (157)" (2:155-157)

Knowledge and certitude play major roles in boosting our faith in Allah; however, even our current knowledge of Allah is sufficient to allow us to trust Him, especially if we focus and maintain our composure during the crises we encounter from time to time.

Our acknowledgement of the reality of *ghaib* (the unseen/unknown) and the certainty that Allah is close to us and will answer our prayers provides us with serenity and peace.

We must trust Allah and believe Him when He says He is with us and that He loves us and wants us to live happily and well. He is perfection, beauty, and absolute power. We must ignore all of the temptations offered by Satan, who tries to make us skeptical about Allah, the God, who created us and does not need our worship. He created the cosmos for our happiness. Do not submit to Satan's tempting whispers, no matter how logical and reasonable they may seem.

Would you ever believe—no matter what the evidence in front of you says—that your mother, who raised you and gave you everything she had since the earliest days of your life, was trying to purposefully mistreat you? How, then, could you believe these whispers about Allah, who is more caring to you even than your mother? "How should I have hope in other than You, when the good—all of it—is in Your hand? How should I expect from others, when for You are the creation and the command? Should I cut off my hope for You, when You have shown me of Your bounty that for which I have not asked? Would You make me have need for my like whilst I hold fast to Your cord?" (Munajat (whispered prayer) al Rajeen (of the Hopeful), Imam Ali Zein El Aabidin).

We have to trust that Allah will not let us down and that He will always be with us to help us follow the correct path for strength and connectedness. He wants this for us more than we want it for ourselves. However, this guidance and pull may often manifest in the form of tests, suffering, and misfortune.



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**فإذا كان مدى حبنا لله
يحدد بشكل كبير مستوى
سيرنا إليه سبحانه وتعالى.**
**﴿قُلْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُحِبُّونَ اللَّهَ فَاتَّبِعُونِي
يُحْبِبْكُمُ اللَّهُ﴾ (ال عمران، ٣١)**

Principles of the Path to Allah - Faith and trust in Allah

8:30

Allah, the Subtle and the Acquainted, may see a benefit for us in depriving us of some of what we deserve according to the standards of this earthly life, al-Dunya, and hence He does so. On the other hand, He may see a benefit for us in giving us what we do not deserve, again according to the standards of earthly life, al-Dunya, and hence he gives it to us as a form of compassion: **“Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?”** (67:14).

In all of these cases, no matter how much we suffer or how many doors are shut in our faces,

for rational or irrational reasons, we must keep our faith in Allah and know for certain that He will not abandon us, because **“Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy”** (6:12).

Faith in Allah is the basis and spirit of the concept of, which is the concept of reliance on God or trusting in God's plan . It does not mean hoping to get our desired outcome without making the necessary effort or plans. Rather, faith in Allah is what keeps us poised and composed. It protects us from fear and stress and enables us to move along in life with knowledge, wisdom, and a positive attitude.

The goal of the messages of all the Prophets is to get humanity to believe in Allah, and one of the most important aspects of this belief is relying on Allah, alone, and not entrusting their affairs to any being apart from Allah. “And We gave Moses the Scripture and made it a guide for the Children of Israel, stating:” **“Do not take besides Me any other Trustee of Affairs.”** (Surat Al-Israa, 2)

Balance:

Imagine someone does bodybuilding training but only exercises their biceps. After a while, they would look unbalanced, with great muscular arms that dwarfed the rest of their body. The consideration of balance is important not just for the physique but for all aspects of human development, and in order to grow and improve in a balanced way, we must work on all facets of our beings. Yes, there may be a few things that we enjoy working on more than others, but this does not mean that we can focus on them to the exclusion of everything else: **“And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance (7) That you not transgress within the balance”** (55:7-8).

Unfortunately, the trait of balance is not very prevalent in our reality. People might focus on studying and seeking knowledge, believing this to be one of the best qualities to bring them closer to the power and beauty of God, but ignore cleansing their souls and their role in social reform. Some others might focus on social work but ignore their responsibility to take care of their families. Some others might emphasize career development but do little in other aspects of their lives. Others still might put all their focus on caring for their families, cleansing themselves, and achieving purification, causing them to neglect the other aspects.

The most likely reason for us to focus our efforts on one aspect of our lives is that we enjoy doing so. That is fine, but we cannot expect Allah to reward us in the same way as someone who does the same thing purely for the sake of Allah.

On the other hand, we come to this world with needs that emerge from both dimensions, the body and the soul. We need to eat, drink, wear clothes, have fun, love, think, learn, and be proud.

In order to move toward Allah, we must fulfill all of these requirements in a balanced way. Allah denounced monasticism: “Say, “Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?” Say, “They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection” (7:32).

It is definitely not possible to practice all of these activities on a daily basis—and indeed, we are not required to. What we are required to do, as much as we can, is practice our various day-to-day activities—including entertainment and self-development—at a pace that fits our nature, capabilities, and circumstances.

Imam Musa al-Kadhim said, “Make sure your time is divided to four types of activities: time to pray in solitude to Allah, time to make a living, time to socialize with your trusted brothers, who know your shortcomings and are honest with you, and time to enjoy in things not prohibited by Allah. It is with the help of this last kind that you get to be able to do the other three kinds.”

Devotion To Allah:

Aside from practicing our various daily activities as acts of worship to Allah, we may also practice them with any other intention or goal, and so long as that intention or goal is worthy, Allah will reward us for it and we will get closer to Him. However, this reward





(thawab) and proximity (qurb) are incomparable to what we would achieve if our intention and goal for the same action were purely to attain the love of Allah.

Sincerity of intention toward Allah is the single most important factor in the bestowal of divine mercy upon us. For this reason, the smallest of deeds done with sincere intention is rewarded far more than a huge deed that is done with impure intention. The Prophet said, *"The intention of the believer is better than his deed."*

Being gentle on one's self:

The Great Apostle said, *"Kindness is not to be found in anything but that it adds to its beauty and it is not withdrawn from anything but it makes it defective."*

On our way to Allah, we might hear about some of the karamat (thaumaturgic acts) of the saints and be tempted to exhaust ourselves in acts of worship and doing well. This is a categorical mistake that can create a strong backlash; in fact, it may even revert us

to our original state. The Great Prophet said, “Rest yourselves from time to time. If the hearts get tired, they become blind,” while Imam Ali said, “Hearts are imbued with passion and the power of advancing and retreating. Therefore, approach them for action at the time of their passionateness and when they are in a mood for advancing, because if hearts are forced [to do a thing] they will be blinded.”

Failure to consider the principle of a gentle approach may indicate that we have not comprehended the process of movement toward Allah. This motion occurs through

practicing various daily activities in a simple, gentle, positive, passionate, and open-minded manner according to the doctrines of Sharia and driven by the love of Allah.

The Apostle said, “O Ali, this religion is deep, so enter into it gently. Do not make the worship of your Lord hated by yourself, for the one who has fatigued his mount and is unable to continue his journey—that is, the one who is excessive—has neither a riding animal nor can he travel. Therefore, act as one who hopes to die in old age but be cautious with the caution of one who is afraid that he will die tomorrow.”



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 18

From the following, select one verse for each of the five principles of walking to God that were mentioned in the lesson. Allow yourself ten minutes to do this.

1. "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided." (Quran 2:186)

.....

2. "Not equal are those believers remaining [at home] - other than the disabled - and the mujahideen, [who strive and fight] in the cause of Allah with their wealth and their lives. Allah has preferred the mujahideen through their wealth and their lives over those who remain [behind], by degrees. And to both Allah has promised

the best [reward]. But Allah has preferred the mujahideen over those who remain [behind] with a great reward -" (Quran 4: 95)

.....

3. "But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters." (Quran 28:77)

.....

4. "Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."" (Quran 3:31)

.....

5. "Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."" (Quran 3:31)

.....

6. "Not equal are the companions of the Fire and the companions of Paradise. The companions of Paradise - they are the attainers [of success]." (Quran 59:20)

.....

7. "So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak." (Quran 4:76)

.....

8. . "And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion." (Quran 98:5)

.....

9. "Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity. It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned. "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people."" (Quran 2:286)

.....

10. "O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered." (Quran 8:24)

.....

19

Common Misconceptions about the Path to Allah

“Indeed, ‘it is’ We ‘Who’ created humankind and ‘fully’ know what their souls whisper to them, and We are closer to them than ‘their’ jugular vein.” (Surat Qaaf, 16)

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وهذا ما يجعل داخلنا
مرتبطاً ارتباطاً وثيقاً
ويقينيّاً بصاحب القوة
والرحمة المطلقة

■ Common Misconceptions about the Path to Allah

15:51

Common Misconceptions About Journeying to Allah

Misconception 1: The Illusion of an Ideal Environment

Misconception: One can only journey to Allah in a pure and faithful environment and that temptations and pressures make drawing closer nearly impossible.



Correction

Challenges are the fuel for the journey and spiritual maturity

an environment full of conflicts builds immunity and awakens resolve.



Misconception 2: The Illusion of the Rarity of Love

Misconception: Most worship is motivated by fear or greed, not love and that worship through love is a rare exception for a select few.



Correction

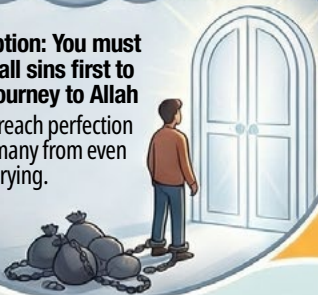
Love for Allah is an innate origin that needs discovery, not invention

the problem is not the absence of love, but the existence of material "veils" that need to be removed.



Misconception 3: The Illusion of Pre-emptive Perfection

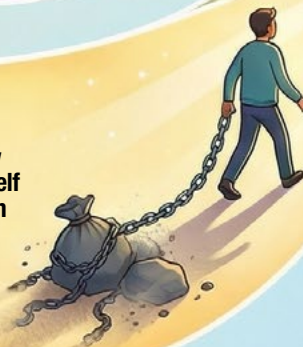
Misconception: You must get rid of all sins first to start the journey to Allah waiting to reach perfection prevents many from even trying.



Correction

Start in order to draw closer, for proximity itself helps with purification

embarking with sincerity makes leaving sins easier automatically as proximity to Allah increases.



Embark with sincerity... and walk, for proximity opens the path for you.

This is the solution to all misconceptions related to environment, love, and sins.

Regrettably, our current culture involves many common misconceptions that hinder the motion of humankind toward Allah. For this reason, we must turn away from all the negative thoughts and obsessions that Satan tries to sow in our minds.

Several methods can be used to treat these common misconceptions and satanic delusions. These include the use of self-suggestion, contemplation on the Quran and the Sharia scripts. Some of the most common misconceptions are discussed below.

Is a pure, believing environment essential?

There is a widespread belief that the path to Allah is only possible in a pure and devoted culture free of sinful temptations—the kind of culture that flourishes in religious schools. Some people argue that attempting to move toward Allah in societies like ours is almost impossible.

They argue that our usual environments are full of glamor and the pleasures of the earthly life, al-Dunya. Our lusts, desires, and delusions tie us up, control our practices, behaviors, emotions, and reactions, and shape our mental maps and imaginations. Even if, in a moment of clarity and awareness, we attempt to take control of our internal desires, our overall social system and familial requirements will press hard, and we will submit to them. This is if we manage to keep our career, with its requirements, machinations, and conflicts, from corrupting our pure souls; if it does not turn us into monsters that seek to avenge those who have wronged us, or at least rejoice

in their hurt. The most we can aspire for is to be forgiven by Allah and get into paradise.

This negative thinking is a declaration of defeat and failure, even before we begin to try. Our subconscious mind submits to this conviction, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, which inevitably ends in failure.

Not only is this belief untrue, it is the total opposite of the truth. Those who grow up in ordinary environments, like us, have greater immunity to toxic ways of living and are healthier than those who are born and raised in “spiritually disinfected” environments, free from the bacteria of corruption and lust.

Ordinary environments are those that are typical for the growth of humankind and its motion toward Allah. It is in our nature that when we want to achieve something and face difficulties and obstacles, we are motivated to do better to reach our goals. When we are helpless, we do not become hopeless; rather, we dig inside ourselves and mobilize our latent capacities to overcome the challenge.

This interaction and ongoing struggle are the path to Allah. We transcend and rise above them, toward Him, without even being aware of it: “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it” (84:6).

The idea here is that it is not our feeling of devotion to Allah that determines our proximity to Him, even though it is one of the most important criteria. It is not our insufficiency; it is not our distance from the earthly world; rather, it is our level of wisdom, maturity, knowledge, willpower, and perseverance. In short, it is our nobility, the development of our abilities and our appreciation of beauty.

The problem is that the day-to-day culture we feed on and breathe in depicts an image of the devotee who seeks to be close to Allah as being like monks and scholars, which creates barriers between us and those levels, because we are neither monks nor scholars. Herein lies the major problem.

Dealing with this life, encountering all the bitter and sweet realities it contains and facing its challenges is the fastest way to Allah, if we keep Allah in our sights and work with that goal in mind.

Moreover, whenever we face a challenge or a problem in this “ordinary” environment, we should seek the help of Allah. This is a powerful act of servitude binds us tightly to Allah.

In order to maximize the benefits we reap from these challenges and this turmoil, we are required to change our paradigm and our way of thinking about them. Instead of regarding them as obstacles, temptations, and barriers to Allah, let us see them as means and tools for getting closer to Allah; components of a character-forming program that Allah has created for us to facilitate our march towards Him. As such, the road to Allah is not pursued by avoiding these situations but by positively interacting with them as He intends us to do.

Worship of the free

This misconception is rooted in the fact that humans generally worship Allah and abide by religious doctrines for one of two reasons: because they fear punishment (the worship of slaves), or because they desire a reward (the worship of merchants). It is very rare to find someone who worships Allah purely out of love for Him. Imam Ali refers to this kind of worship as “the worship of the free.”

Perhaps this misconception is even more common than the first one, and its negative effects on the subconscious mind are similar.

The fact is that most of us worship Allah because we love Him. The reason we love the Great Prophet, the imams of Ahl al-Bâit and the allies of Allah is that they are the people of Allah.

The reason for this is our basic make-up and intuition as humans. The love of Allah penetrates our deepest veins: [“So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth”](#) (Quran 30:30), and because the love of Allah is

firmly anchored in our depths and our veins through the beauty and the divine majesty embodied by the Great Prophet (PBUH), the imams of Ahl al-Bayt (PBUT), and the channels of their love.

Indeed, the love of Allah is established deep within us, it permeates our hearts and controls our feelings, emotions and behavior, despite the misconceptions named at the beginning of this section, which have the potential to undermine our love for Allah and interfere negatively with our path to Him.

Our sizable engagement with material illusions and the pursuit of luxury can form a barrier to this intuitive love and engulf it in thick layers. All we must do, then, is gradually and gently peel back these layers.

The path to Allah and our sins

Another common misconception is that we cannot walk the path to Allah until we have stopped sinning. Perhaps this incorrect belief

prevents the great majority of us from even thinking about the path to Allah, for we know we have committed many wrongdoings.

However, this is not true. Some wrongdoings and a few instances of bad behavior here and there will not hinder us on our path to Allah, so long as our general stance is aligned in the direction of virtue and servitude.

We can gradually ascend the path of connectedness and get closer to Him, even despite the weakness of our worship and the flaccidity that overwhelms us concerning certain things. The Apostle said, [“The Servant \[of Allah\] may reach, by virtue of his good manners, the great levels of afterlife, and honored states, \[despite him\] being weak in worship.”](#)

Some of us might suffer from a propensity to lie or slander, God forbid, while others might have other lesions on our ethical integrity. However, while there is no doubt that these diseases limit and hinder our movement and progress towards God, they do not stop us from pursuing it altogether. At times, they

may even lead us closer to God—when our torment of conscience drives us to approach the Almighty for relief and forgiveness.

There are many Islamic quotations, which say that a believer in the state of suffering, with feelings of guilt and the desire to seek repentance from Allah is better than one in the state of ojob (self-admiration) for not having committed any sins. Al Imam al Sadiq said, “Allah knew that committing [some] wrongdoings is better for the believer than being in the state of Ojob [self-admiration], and if it was not for that, no believer would have been afflicted by any sin ever.”

In another hadeeth: “...the companions of the apostle said ‘O Messenger of Allah, we fear on ourselves the hypocrisy,’ to which he asked ‘why do you fear that?’ they said ‘when we are with you, you remind us and motivate us, and we forget the [temptations of] life and feel ascetic in it as if we are looking to the realm of the afterlife, paradise and hell. When we leave you and go to our homes and mingle with our families and kids, we forget that state as if we never learned a thing from you. Would you not

be concerned that we are becoming hypocrite? The apostle replied ‘No, these are the steps of Satan. He tempts you in this life. By Allah, if you continue on this state you described yourself in, the angels shall shake your hands, and you would walk on water. If you were not having sins and then seek repentance for it, Allah would have created other creatures who do commit sins and repent for it and then Allah forgives them. The believer is tested [by sins] and recurrent on asking forgiveness. Have you not heard the words of Allah in the Quran “Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves,” and, “seek forgiveness of your Lord and repent to Him.”

The fact is that the more we move toward Allah and get closer to Him, the stronger, purer, more determined, and more understanding we become. This, in turn, makes us more capable of getting rid of our sins and our negative traits, though we might not realize it.

When we are short on willpower, proximity to Allah and motion towards Him is what we need in order to get rid of our weaknesses.

Note this verse: “...and establish prayer, Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing” (29:45).

Yes, there are higher levels of proximity to Allah—ones we cannot reach before we are purified of our wrongdoings—but these levels are not even imaginable at our day-to-day level of faith. Moreover, once we reach the doorstep of these levels, we will already have traveled away from all our sins, naturally and spontaneously.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 19

First: In the Quran, Allah mentioned a group of women as an example that a believing environment is not a prerequisite for a human to be able to advance towards God. Take 6 minutes to recall the verses that show this.

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Second: Take four minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

- 1. "And We did not send into a city any warner except that its affluent said, "Indeed we, in that with which you were sent, are disbelievers." And they said, "We are more [than the believers] in wealth and children, and we are not to be punished."" (Quran 34:34-35)
- 2. "And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness." (Quran47:17)
- 3. "O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it." (Quran 84:6)
- 4. "So direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of

Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.” (Quran 30:30)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ Dealing with this life, with its reality, its bitterness, its temptations, its delights, and its challenges is the pathway to God.
- ☐ Our fascination with material things, luxury and wealth is a hurdle to our love of God and religion, and shrouds it in a thick coat that conceals the light of God from us.
- ☐ Man has an innate love of God, goodness and religion.
- ☐ The more we turn to Him and the closer we are to Him, the stronger we are and the greater our clarity, purity, resolve and understanding. This, in turn, makes us better able to get rid of many of our negative traits and sins.

20

Seeking Knowledge

“Only those fear Allah, from among
His servants, who have knowledge.”
Fatir 35:28





■ Seeking Knowledge

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وكلما استحكم فينا الإيمان
بهذه المعرفة ترسخت في أعماقنا
ووجداننا وعقلنا الباطن وشكلت
خرائطنا وتصوراتنا الذهنية

7:00

Knowledge is the greatest of the existential attributes and capabilities that shape a human being and distinguish it from all other creatures. The development of knowledge is the way to achieve happiness and proximity to Allah.

Besides purifying the self, improving human knowledge is the cornerstone of the mission of the prophets: “Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom and teaching you that which you did not know” (2:151).

The greatest knowledge of all is to know Allah, the notion of monotheism, ourselves, and the reality of our devotional servitude to Allah.

However, the knowledge we are talking about is not the same as theoretical knowledge but is a completely intuitive knowledge; it overwhelms our subconscious mind, penetrates our depths, and flows with our blood. Iblis was knowledgeable at the theoretical level, yet he was disobedient to Allah. Imam Ali said, “The foremost in religion is the acknowledgement of Him, the perfection

of acknowledging Him is to testify Him, and the perfection of testifying Him is to believe in His Oneness, the perfection of believing in His Oneness is the devotion to Him.”

This emphasizes the role of knowledge on the path to Allah and in every movement we make in life. Imam Ali, in a commandment of the Commander of the Faithful to his companion Kumail, said, “In any movement [you have], you need knowledge”; also, “Allah shall have mercy on a Man who knew where he came from, in what he is living, and where he is heading to.” Imam al Sadiq said, “That who works without insight is like that who walks without a map; walking faster only makes him more off track.”

This is why the first verse revealed began with the word “*iqra*”(read), perhaps to stress the fact that the path to Allah starts with knowledge.

Theoretical knowledge forms the template for our mental concepts and maps. The more faith is coupled with this knowledge, the deeper it takes root in our senses and in our subconscious mind, in our mental maps and perceptions.

Together with contemplation and reflection, theoretical knowledge is necessary for us to perceive reality effectively.

It is important to emphasize here that the knowledge we are talking about is not just religious in nature; it is any knowledge that expands our horizons and enables us to understand our environment and ourselves. This includes almost every discipline of knowledge we encounter.

Yes, knowledge about Allah, the doctrines of the religion, the soul, and jurisprudence are the greatest of all, since they are the basis for our path to Allah—but we do not need to be specialists in these areas. From a theoretical perspective, it is sufficient that we know enough to see the path to Allah clearly. By practicing meditation and contemplation, we can anchor this knowledge deep within our subconscious mind and then use it to live our lives in a positive, practical way.

Our bookshelves contain many works that can help with this theoretical knowledge. I recommend obtaining and reading at least some of them.

I also recommend reciting the Holy Quran on a regular basis, contemplating its meaning as deeply as possible and reviewing one of your favorite exegeses. Note that there are a number of reliable Quranic interpretations that are available on the web and easily downloadable on a mobile phone.

Finally, I recommend pursuing the practices that form the cornerstone of propositional knowledge, namely, thinking and contemplation. This can be regarding yourself and your thoughts, feelings, and fluctuations, or regarding the social circles around you, the events taking place in them and the interdependence between these events. It can also be regarding the entire cosmos and the whole of creation, or Allah, his Unity and His majestic and beautiful attributes. “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?” (41:53).

Note that you do not need to dedicate long periods to thinking and contemplation; you can weave it into your day, in between your other tasks. This will help you to feel more comfortable and content in your life and will empower you to become more mature in your decision-making.



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 20

Take ten minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts. Some of the concepts match with more than one verse:

Islamic concepts:

1. The greatest knowledge of all is our knowledge of God and His true oneness.
2. We need reflection and careful consideration in order to distinguish what is real in life.
3. The knowledge that brings man closer to God is not theoretical knowledge, but rather the completely intuitive knowledge that overwhelms our subconscious mind, our feelings and behavior.
4. Theoretical knowledge is not classed merely as knowledge of religious matters; it is any knowledge that expands our horizons and enables us to understand our environment and ourselves.
5. Knowledge is the greatest of the existential attributes and capabilities that shape a human being and distinguish it from all other creatures. The development of knowledge is the way to achieving happiness and proximity to Allah.

Quranic verses:

- ☐ “And among people and moving creatures and grazing livestock are various colors similarly. Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Forgiving.” (Quran 35:28)

- “So high [above all] is Allah, the Sovereign, the Truth. And, [O Muhammad], do not hasten with [recitation of] the Qur'an before its revelation is completed to you, and say, "My Lord, increase me in knowledge."” (Quran 20:114)
- “Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and the earth are signs for a people who use reason.” (Quran :164)
- “You worship not besides Him except [mere] names you have named them, you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority. Legislation is not but for Allah . He has commanded that you worship not except Him. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know.” (Quran 12:40)
- “This [Qur'an] is notification for the people that they may be warned thereby and that they may know that He is but one God and that those of understanding will be reminded.” (Quran 14:52)
- “Then on the Day of Resurrection He will disgrace them and say, "Where are My 'partners' for whom you used to oppose [the believers]?" Those who were given knowledge will say, "Indeed disgrace, this Day, and evil are upon the disbelievers" –” (Quran: 16:27)
- “Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire.” (Quran 3:191)
- “Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice. There is no deity except Him, the Exalted in Might, the Wise.” (Quran 3:18)

- The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it on is like that of a donkey who carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people." (Quran 62:5)
- "Say, "Believe in it or do not believe." Indeed, those who were given knowledge before it - when it is recited to them, they fall upon their faces in prostration, and they say, "Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled." And they fall upon their faces weeping, and the Qur'an increases them in humble submission." (Quran 17:107-109)
- "And We made from among them leaders guiding by Our command when they were patient and [when] they were certain of Our signs." (Quran 32:24)

21

Self-Awareness

“Say, ‘O Prophet, ‘Everyone acts in their own way.’” (Surat Al-Israa, 84)

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Self-Awareness

▶ Watch The Video

كل نفس إنسانية

تختلف في خصائصها

عن غيرها من نفوس البشر

6:18

Self-Awareness: Your Key to Knowing Your Lord

Every human soul is as unique as a fingerprint; understanding this individuality enables a person to align their righteous actions with their passions and personality, thereby leading a more harmonious life and drawing closer to God.



Why Self-Awareness?

"Say, Each works according to his manner"

Your unique nature is the source of your actions, decisions, and directions in life.



What is Self-Awareness?

It is the ability to evaluate yourself objectively and align your behavior with your internal values.



He who knows himself knows his Lord



Self-awareness achieves harmony between body, mind, heart, and soul, leading to tranquility and proximity to Allah.

Benefits of Self-Knowledge



Higher Integrity and Honesty

Research shows they are less likely to lie, betray, or steal.



Success at Work and Effective Leadership

They are more likely to be promoted and own more profitable companies.



Greater Achievement and Stronger Relationships

Self-aware individuals are more creative, self-confident, and capable of communication.

The Awareness Gap: The Shocking Truth



95% 

of people believe they possess self-awareness

10-15% 

possess true self-awareness.

Self-Deception:

More than 80% of us deceive ourselves; most people invent answers that seem real but are often wrong.



How to Enhance Your Self-Knowledge?

5. Beware of monitoring obsessions

The golden rule is to monitor with detachment, not immersion, to maintain balance.



4. Monitor your thoughts and feelings

Conscious monitoring leads to self-control and more mature decisions.



2. Study yourself regularly

Identify strengths and weaknesses every 3 months in your spiritual and behavioral aspects.



1. Define your values and goals

This clarity prevents you from chasing illusory goals imposed by society.



Closing Message

"Self-knowledge is a calm and deep path"

It begins with honesty, continues with review, and bears fruit in tranquility.



6. Account for yourself calmly

Review your day before sleep without self-flagellation to increase tranquility and inner growth.



3. Seek sincere advice

Advice reveals blind spots in your personality and grants you deeper awareness.



Self-knowledge is not a slogan, but a conscious journey that requires balanced practices combining the definition of values, self-study, seeking advice, conscious observation, and calm self-accountability, while maintaining constant caution against self-deception and falling into the trap of excessive monitoring.

Why Do We Need Self-Awareness?

Every person holds a different set of characteristics, which makes each one of us unique. These characteristics arise from the genes we get from our parents and the way our brains develop, and they constantly change from the day we are born, in accordance with the educational methods we are exposed to, the society we live in, and the experiences we go through. They also change in accordance with the decisions we make, our behaviors, our thoughts, our emotions, and how we deal with life, among other factors.

As we mentioned in previous lessons, this self that makes each of us unique is the source of our activities, behaviors, thoughts, reactions and decisions, as well as the actions we carry out. Everything we do comes from who we are. Allah, Exalted is He, says: “Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘Everyone acts in their own way.’” (Surat Al-Israa, 84)

Notice Allah’s Words in Surat Al-Kahf: 110, “So whoever hopes for the meeting with their Lord, let them do good deeds,” there is no specification for what the good deeds are. Apart from the obligations imposed by Allah, there are many good deeds you can perform, and you can choose the good deeds that suit your personality and allow you to pursue your passions in life, “and to do good deeds that please you” (Surat An-Naml, 19).

Surat Al-Kahf mentioned different individuals who reached the peak in their faith and proximity to Allah, despite the massive differences in their personalities and actions in this world, like the Prophet Moses, the People of the Cave, the Righteous Servant (Al-Khodr), and Dhul Qarnayn, peace be upon all of them. All these individuals managed to attain the highest levels of self-honesty through their good deeds, which were suited to who they were as people, and this is despite the vast differences between the good deeds that each of them did.



Watch The Video

عندما نقيم دوائنا
تكون نظرتنا منحازة لذاتنا
وغير موضوعية

ربما تصوراتنا وفهمنا لشيء معين
قد يكون مجانبا للصواب وللواقع

How can one enhance self-knowledge?

13:38

Your capacity to do good deeds depends on your characteristics as a person and your passions, so you should choose your path in life and then choose the good deeds you can do while following it.

Assuch, it is necessary to attain self-awareness. By doing so, you can control yourself even more and achieve harmony between the four aspects of your existence: your body (all the

actions you carry out), your mind (thoughts and beliefs), your heart (feelings and emotions), and your soul (your innate nature). By doing so, you can become a simple, strong, calm, and great person, and you will be blessed with Allah's satisfaction and proximity. Imam Ali (AS) said: "He who knows himself knows his Lord."¹⁴

14 Ghurur Al-Hikam 7946

Psychologists Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund defined self-awareness as follows: "Self-awareness is the ability to focus on yourself and how your actions, thoughts, or emotions do or don't align with your internal standards. "If you're highly self-aware, you can objectively evaluate yourself, manage your emotions, align your behavior with your values, and understand correctly how others perceive you".¹⁵

As a person becomes more and more self-aware, they become more able to control who they are and direct themselves in a direction that ensures their happiness, both in this world and in the afterlife. Imam Ali (AS) said: "He who knows himself has obtained the greatest victory."¹⁶

Dr. Tascha Eurich emphasizes this idea. She mentions that: "And there's actually a ton of research showing that people who are self-aware are more fulfilled." They have stronger relationships. They are more creative. They are

¹⁵ What is self-awareness, and why is it important? - April 21, 2021 - <https://www.betterup.com/blog/what-is-self-awareness>

¹⁶ Mizan Al-Hikma – Muhammad Ar-Reeshhari, Vol. 3- Page 1876



more confident and better communicators. They are less likely to lie, cheat, and steal. They perform better at work and are more promotable. "And they're more effective leaders with more profitable companies."¹⁷

How well do people know themselves?

Dr. Tascha Eurich, an organizational psychologist, studied people attempting to become self-aware over a period of 4 years. She carried out a survey that included thousands of people and analyzed approximately 800 scientific studies. Her

¹⁷ <https://youtu.be/tGdsOXZpyWE>

response was, “How well do people know themselves?” “My team has found that 95% of people think they’re self-aware, but the real number is closer to 10 % to 15%. You know what this means, do you not? It means that on a good day - on a good day - 80% of us are lying to ourselves about whether we know ourselves.”¹⁸

What makes this even more worrisome is that it is very hard for a person to be self-aware, despite it being very important. In the same TED talk referenced above, Dr. Eurich says: “Researchers have found that no matter how hard we try, we can’t excavate our unconscious thoughts, feelings, and motives. And because so much is hidden from our conscious awareness, we end up inventing answers that feel true but are often very wrong.”

The truth is that it is not a matter of having or not having any self-awareness; but rather, it is about how much self-awareness we have. We all have varying degrees of self-awareness but people who truly possess full self-awareness are extremely rare.

¹⁸ <https://youtu.be/tGdsOXZpyWE>

How Can a Person Increase their Self-Awareness?

The following practices were included in Islamic texts to increase our self-awareness: However, we have to be very careful while doing these practices to avoid tricking ourselves and becoming arrogant because we tend towards evil unless Allah grants us His Mercy.

Set some time to set your values, principles, and goals

Think about your values, principles, and goals and put them into practice at every moment of the day, until they become deeply engrained in the depths of your soul and your unconscious mind. Talk about them with your closest friends, your spouse, and perhaps with your children. Dream about them. If you don’t do these things, you’ll end up chasing false dreams that were imposed upon you by the local culture and society (like buying a fancy car, owning a large house, obtaining a university degree, getting married at a certain

age, etc.). These goals often don't fill us with real satisfaction or happiness.

When setting your goals, ask yourself why you are where you are at a certain moment. What were you created for in life and what should you achieve? What makes life satisfying for you? What strengths do you have that aid you in achieving your higher goals? What is the path to achieving these goals? Ask yourself similar questions and then plan your life path by these answers, act in a manner that is consistent with your path, and always review and update your goals.

When you do this, you become more and more self-aware, and you start understanding the depths of who you are. As such, you can start understanding the world around you even more, and you will be able to deal with the world in a more appropriate manner that allows you to reach your goals and aspirations. "They are those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth and pray, "Our Lord! You have not created all of this without purpose. Glory be

to You! Protect us from the torment of the Fire." (Surat Aal-Imran, 191)

Analyze yourself fully on a routine basis

The Believer should analyze themselves, through their previous experiences. They should study and analyze these experiences in depth, to define the strengths and weaknesses they can identify through them. They should then cement them in their minds or write them down in a journal, and this analysis should contain different aspects, including the cultural, spiritual, and objective aspects, etc. Such an analysis should be performed on a routine basis, like every three months.

Request and accept feedback and advice

Giving and requesting advice is one of the most important and blessed Islamic practices, and that is why Allah conditioned success on urging other believers to the truth and perseverance when He said, Exalted is He, in Surat Al-Asr: "By the passage of time! Surely humanity is in grave loss, except those who have faith, do well, and urge each other to the

truth, and urge each other to perseverance.” It is reported that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “He who does not awake and sleep urging other Muslims to the truths of Allah, His Messenger, His Book and His Imams, is not a Muslim.” It is also reported that he said (PBUH): “The greatest of people in Allah’s sight on the Day of Resurrection are those who strove most on this Earth to give [righteous] advice to Allah’s creation.” Also, he said (PBUH): “Religion is advice and urging others to the truth.”

The advice does not only help you get the objective opinion of a neutral person; it also helps you think aloud, which encourages your unconscious mind, and it will help you realize many points you had not realized about yourself. The following points are tips for how to request advice:

- **Request advice from people you know are honest with you and care for you:** We are very biased and subjective when it comes to analyzing ourselves, and we view ourselves in accordance with our opinions and views, which often do not coincide with reality. As such, we have to abstract

ourselves from our opinions at times and request advice from our close friends or people we know are honest with us and care for us. “Nor would I take the misleaders as helpers.” (Surat Al-Kahf, 51), and Imam Ali (AS) said: “A friend is called sadeeq [in Arabic] because they are truthful with you, both regarding who you are and regarding your faults, so approach anyone who does so with you as a friend.”

- **Be objective, clear, and specific when seeking advice:** Don’t ask for general, unclear, or unspecific things, and try to ask the person you are seeking advice from very specific questions and objective to the extent that is possible, to enable them to answer objectively so you can understand the answer as clearly as possible, avoiding erroneous conclusions or interpretations.
- **Do this regularly:** As you analyze yourself on a routine basis, especially when you face difficult situations, you will feel that you need an objective opinion from someone else, regarding a situation, you are facing or an opinion you have.

- **Accept criticism in good faith:** Accept criticism in good faith without getting defensive. Imam Ali (AS) said: “Don’t respond to he who gives you advice”, because it is natural to dislike hearing criticism, especially when it is harsh and when you do not agree with the opinion of the person giving you advice. Imam Ali Zain Al-Abideen (AS): “And the right of he who offers you advice is to be kind to him, and give him your ear, for if he gives you valid advice, praise Allah, Exalted is He, and if he gives advice that doesn’t apply to you, bless him and doesn’t accuse him.”¹⁹
- Thank the person who gives you advice and tell them that you are going to use the advice to improve the negative aspects of your personality. Imam Ali (AS): “Heed the advice of he who gives it to you, and apply it to yourself.”²⁰

Stay Vigilant with Yourself and Focus on How You React to Your Daily Activities

The unconscious mind often reacts directly to the sensations that arise within us, while the conscious mind controls the flow of the feelings and blocks them from affecting us by supervising them, along with the five senses and everything else that affects a person. Everything that affects our senses creates a sensation within us.

Staying vigilant with oneself is an internal control, and it allows a person to use their mind to control their emotions and to think well before doing something, along with doing good deeds and avoiding deeds that might have unpleasant consequences.

As such, we can say that staying vigilant of oneself is an internal thought or sensation that impedes a person from saying something specific or taking a specific action, and we

19 Mizan Al-Hikma – Muhammad Ar-Reeshhari, Volume 1, Page 703

20 Mizan Al-Hikma – Muhammad Ar-Reeshhari, Volume 2, Pag 1859

can define staying vigilant of yourself as a personal trait that demonstrates the capacity to control one's behavior, in accordance with specific situations, in a manner that pleases Allah. "O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what [deeds] it has sent forth for tomorrow." (Surat Al-Hashr, 18)

The Danger of Excessive Vigilance of Oneself

Vigilance over oneself is a two-sided weapon. It allows a person to increase their self-awareness. However, if a person allows themselves to go deep into every thought, be it real or imagined, they will become anxious they will develop, other mental illnesses, and will start needing psychological help and medication. The following practical steps allow a person to avoid the dangers of excessive self-vigilance:

- Entrust all your affairs to Allah, Exalted is He, to protect yourself from fearing what the future brings.
- Invest your present towards your goals, by creating healthy plans to achieve them.



- Improve your time management and do not leave a lot of free time in your schedule, to avoid ruminating on your thoughts.
- Ignore contradictory thoughts.
- Liberate yourself from the influence of your senses and control the sensations that come from deep within. Allow them to rise to the surface.
- Surround yourself with positive people and avoid negative people.

We should keep in mind that the idea behind staying vigilant about oneself is to attain "moderation" towards what happens within us. We should observe our thoughts in an objective and attentive manner, focus on all the sensations that arise within us and we will notice how their effect disappears.²¹

²¹ The Danger of Excessive Vigilance of Oneself | Discover its Impact on Yourself! Tabibi, March 19, 2022

Hold Yourself Accountable

Holding yourself accountable is one of the most important techniques a person can use to elevate their soul, find happiness, tranquility, and improve their behavior. Imam Ali (AS) said: “He who does not hold himself accountable every day is not one of us, for he [who holds himself accountable] seeks to do more good when he does a good deed and when he sins, he repents to Allah.”²²

Holding oneself accountable does not mean admonishing and punishing yourself. Rather, it means that a person should objectively review and assess himself in a calm manner, every day, in order to specify their strengths and weaknesses and to assess their actions and achievements to specify a plan for their actions and developments. It is reported that Imam Ali (AS) said that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “The most pleasant of people is he who holds himself accountable and works for what comes after death.” A person asked Imam Ali: “Oh, Amir Al-Mu’mineen, how does

a person hold himself accountable?” Imam Ali (AS) replied: “At the end of every day, the person says to himself: ‘Oh self, this is a day that has passed that will never come back to you, and Allah will ask you what you spent it on, so what did you do today? Did you remember Allah or praise Him? Did you fulfill a believer’s need today? Did you help a believer with something that was worrying them? Did you honor a believer after their death with their inheritors? Did you avoid backbiting a brother in your faith? Did you help a Muslim? What did you do today?’ and then the person mentions everything they did during that day, and if they mention a good deed they did, they praise Allah and proclaim His Greatness for granting him success, and if they mention sin or shortcoming, they repent to Allah and decide not to repeat the actio”.²³

The greatest thing when it comes to holding yourself accountable is that you can do so while praying to Allah. Through this, you can attain the greatest benefit by getting rid of the negative energy that accumulates in your

22 Rasa'il ash-Shaheed Ath-Thani, page 151

23 Mizan Al-Hikma - Muhammad Ar-Reeshhari, Volume 1, Page 620

heart every day, through the challenges of your day-to-day life, and it will allow you to fill yourself with positive and great energy that will allow you to feel calm and happy.

You can also talk to Allah about the beautiful things you do during your day, as you prostrate to Allah before you go to sleep at night, and as you are seated down before the last prostration. This will fill you with joy, and

you will feel like a little kid who tells their father all the things they did that they were proud of it.

Then, talk to Allah – Exalted is He – about everything wrong you did, the things you didn't like to do and the things you didn't do, even if they are not mistakes per se, and apologize to Allah, Exalted is He, and promise Him that you'll be more vigilant next time.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 21

Take five minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

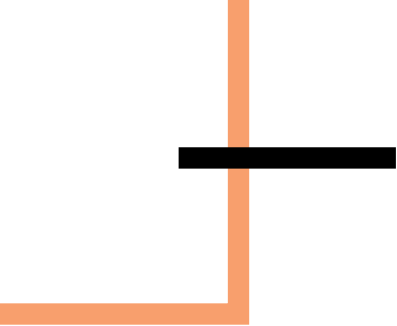
1. "O believers! Be mindful of Allah and let every soul look to what 'deeds' it has sent forth for tomorrow." (Surat Al-Hashr, 18)
2. "'They are' those who remember Allah while standing, sitting, and lying on their sides, and reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth 'and pray', 'Our Lord! You have not created 'all of' this without purpose. Glory be to You! Protect us from the torment of the Fire.'" (Surat Aal-Imran, 191)
3. "And to do good deeds that please you" (Surat An-Naml, 19)
4. "Say, 'O Prophet,' 'Everyone acts in their own way.'" (Surat Al-Israa, 84)
5. "By the 'passage of' time! Surely humanity is in 'grave' loss, except those who have faith, do good, and urge each other to the truth, and urge each other to perseverance." (Surat Al-Asr, 1-3)
6. "Nor would I take the misleaders as helpers." (Surat Al-Kahf, 51)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ Giving and receiving advice is one of the most important Islamic practices.
- ☐ The self is the source of our actions, behaviors, thoughts, reactions and decisions that we take, and everything we do.

- ☐ We should request advice from our close friends and other people we know are honest with us and care for our wellbeing.
- ☐ We can define staying vigilant of yourself as a personal trait that demonstrates the capacity to control one's behavior, in accordance to specific situations, in a manner that pleases Allah.
- ☐ There are many types of good deeds, so you should do the good deeds that suit your personality and allow you to fulfill your passion in life in accordance to who you are.
- ☐ Set some time to specify your values, principles and goals.





“Allah is the ally of those who believe.
He brings them out from darkneses
into the light.” Al-Baqarah 2:257

22

Enhancing Our Capacities



▶ Watch The Video

بيئة النفسه
في إنسان عدس
ينظر من خلالها إلى
ويتفاعل معه على مس
الحياة اليومية

■ Enhancing Our Capacities



12:39

Developing Our Abilities: How Do We Grow as Humans and Get Closer to God?

Part Two: The Field of Application – Where Do We Practice This Growth?

Daily life is the field for purifying the soul.

A successful person is a mission-driven individual who cares about the affairs of his society

Life is not the opposite of closeness to God, but its practical path.

Part One: How Are Values Formed? The Mechanism of Growth



Your psychological environment is the “lens” through which you see the world

We do not interact with reality as it is, but as we see it through our inner perceptions and internal feelings.

Repetition and practice build character traits.

Repeating any behavior, whether positive or negative, turns it over time into part of your personality.

Your professional path is a practical path toward Allah

The challenges and goals of work directly shape your thinking, personality, and relationship with Allah.





Our ability to acquire human values and abilities—the greatest of which is the full understanding of our bondage to God—depends on how we combine three elements. The first is desire; the second is practice; and the third is the status of our mental and spiritual environment, with its various capacities, qualities, skills, perceptions, and mental maps.

Our mental and spiritual environment is constantly moving and changing. It is the cumulative response of all our responses to all

the cues and stimuli we have been exposed to in our lives, no matter how small, whether we consciously absorbed them or not. “And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it and inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it.” (Quran 91:7-9)

The psychological make-up of each of us is a unique lens through which we look at the world and interact with it in daily life. “And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul—it is those who will be the successful.” (Quran 64:16)

We may look at the sea and see the beauty and good; we may listen to its waves and hear mesmerizing music that unleashes our fantasies.

Conversely, we may see a mysterious, scary giant that fills us with fear and a sense of alarm. We may hear mourning, sobbing grief for all those who have drowned and vanished in its depths. We may also see and hear other sentiments, depending on our preconceptions and mental maps.

The view of a sunset may cause us discomfort and unease, or it may fill us with a sense of serenity, restfulness and beauty.

We may hear a ringtone on someone else's phone and immediately recall feelings of sadness because it was the same ringtone we heard when we heard bad news. On the other hand, if it was the same ringtone when receiving good news, it may evoke joy and delight. It all depends on our preconceived notions and experiences of life.

Our psychological make-up determines our responses to various stimuli in daily life. However, this does not mean we cannot willfully change our reactions—in both a positive and negative direction.

The bottom line is that if our psychological make-up has enough clarity, willpower, and passion for benevolence and is in harmony with the human instinct, and there are no psychological issues or obstacles to us doing so, we can attain certain human values and attributes merely by desiring them, loving them and being aware of their presence. With

practice, they will take deeper root within us. [“To Him ascends good speech, and righteous work raises it.”](#) (Quran 35:10)

Rehearsal and repetition of any value or attribute—positive or negative—promote its attainment, even if it is not something we want. The more an attribute is desired, the more strongly it takes root within us and becomes an inseparable part of us. [“Yes, whoever earns evil and his sin has encompassed him—those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide therein eternally.”](#) (Quran 2:81)

For this reason, Islam—through the holy Quran, supplications, and the various acts of worship that we perform—works on correcting our mental concepts and maps and rendering them positive, healthy, and characterized by monotheistic servitude to Allah. It helps us to denounce all kinds of negative emotions, like fear, weakness and anxiety. Islam emphasizes on streamlining our daily individual, and social practices based on these conceptions of monotheistic servitude to Allah. [“There has come to you](#)

from Allah a light and a clear Book, by which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path.” (Quran 5:15-16)

The three elements mentioned above arise from living daily life with positivity and standing up to the challenges life throws at us, while at the same time seeking the legitimate pleasures of life—like wealth, family, a comfortable home and material and moral comforts—in line with Islamic doctrines, human instinct and mental guidance. “O mankind, indeed you are laboring toward your Lord with [great] exertion and will meet it.” (Quran 84:6)

It is by living life positively that we grow, learn, become wiser, transcend morally and spiritually, love Allah, love His attributes (beauty and majesty) and feel our servitude towards Him due to the human instinct that is inbuilt within us. We become more positive in life and devote ourselves to Allah with actions of worship in our day-to-day lives. As a result,

we fulfill our responsibilities towards our families, places of work, societies, ourselves, and humanity with a positive attitude. We have more love for other humans and inanimate things in the world; we grow in transcendence, clarity, and appreciation of beauty and morals. We spontaneously rid ourselves of impurities and get to know Allah better. Our passion for Allah and His beauty becomes more intense; we do not see anything apart from Him, and through Him, we see everything else. We realize that we are part of His manifestations and reflections on the existence and that He loves and takes care of each one of us. “And say, “Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do.” (Quran 9:105)

Through our willpower and perseverance, this state of being becomes second nature, and this, in turn, helps us become what we want to be—or, more precisely, what Allah wants us to be.

Asceticism, reclusion from life, and full-time devotion to prayer and fasting deprive us of the opportunity to transcend and purify our souls, and hence the opportunity to attain proximity to Allah. “And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance.” (Quran 57:27)

The challenge is to strive in life and utilize our capabilities to make a living in accordance with the laws of Islamic Sharia, so that we can enjoy our lives, provide for our families, provide our children with the best education, live in comfortable houses and drive the type of vehicles we like, but all without a state of opulence. Do not fall captive to these pleasures

and indulgences, but abstain from them. It will not affect you psychologically or spiritually if you are without them and are forced to live frugally, provided that not having them does not lead to a state of apathy in which your active, positive efforts to promote your financial conditions and achieve your worldly goals (to God's satisfaction) are diminished. “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship.” (Quran 2:172)

This state of balance can be mastered only through practice, and this is the reason why Allah created Earth and life—to serve as a sort of “training pitch”.

The Prophet (PBUHF) said: “The life is like a farm for the Hereafter”. Consider also this quote from Imam Ali: “The world is a house of truth for those who believe it, and a house of good health for those who understand it, and a house of abundance for those who are willing to furnish themselves with it, and a sermon for those who are willing to listen.”

Your career path: Getting closer to Allah

When we understand the way our existence and capacities evolve, we realize that the better we live and practice our daily activities, the more decisions and challenges we face. This, in turn, means better chances for getting closer to Allah: “Every soul will taste death. And We test you with evil and with good as trial; and to Us you will be returned” (21:35).

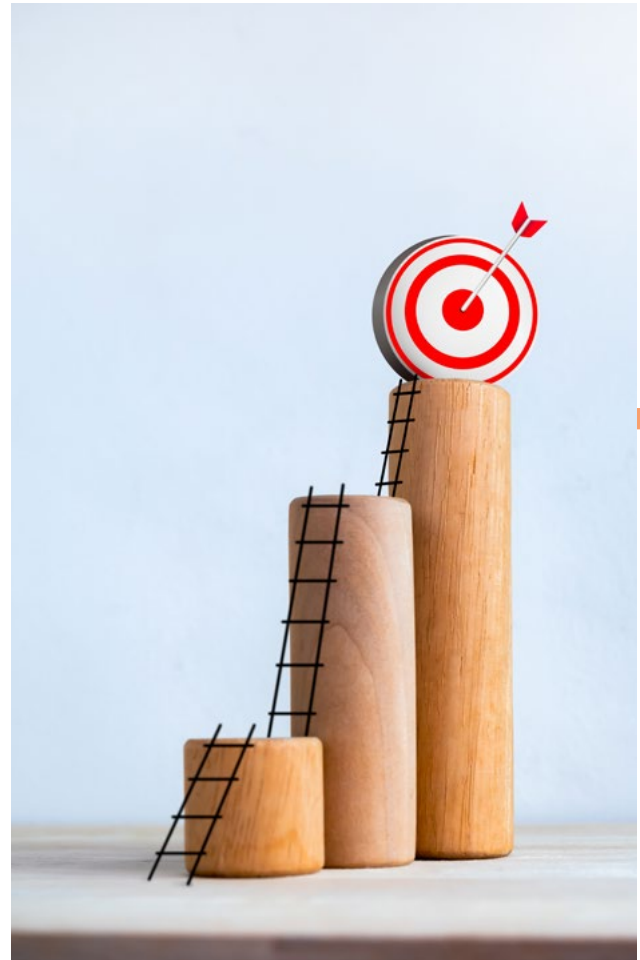
Career path development and the pursuit of a career in the modern world is one of the most beautiful things to happen to people in this regard.

Our path to developing our careers provides a beautiful, interactive and practical platform for practicing life with positivity and efficacy. It is characterized by huge, motivation-driven momentum and by numerous goals for developing multiple aspects of the self. There are clear performance indicators and an automatic and largely effective system of material reward and punishment.

The distinguishing feature of professional careers in this era is that, for the most part, they are no longer manual, but rather intellectual and mental (or a combination of mental and manual), and hence they have a large impact on us and our knowledge and views of life.

For most people, their professional life is the most important axis of their lives; we spend most of our time at work, it consumes more than half of our conscious day, it shapes the silhouette of the rest of the day and it helps to mold our social, cultural, material and educational life.

Hence, it is very important to plan our careers carefully; they directly affect the rest of our life and our family's lives, but even more importantly than that, they affect our path to Allah. Ambitious yet realistic career planning helps us achieve happiness, success, and stability in our work, social and familial lives, and in life in general. Life is a chain composed of numerous links.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 22

Take ten minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts. For some of the concepts, more than one verse applies:

Islamic concepts:

1. A person's psychological environment is the lens through which they see the world and interact with it on the level of daily life.
2. A person's psychological environment is constantly moving and changing. It is the outcome of all their responses and of all the stimuli they are exposed to in their life.
3. We can adopt practices that differ, negatively or positively, from those imposed on us by our psychological environment, and thus also change ourselves negatively or positively.
4. Islam works through the Holy Quran, the books of supplications, the acts of

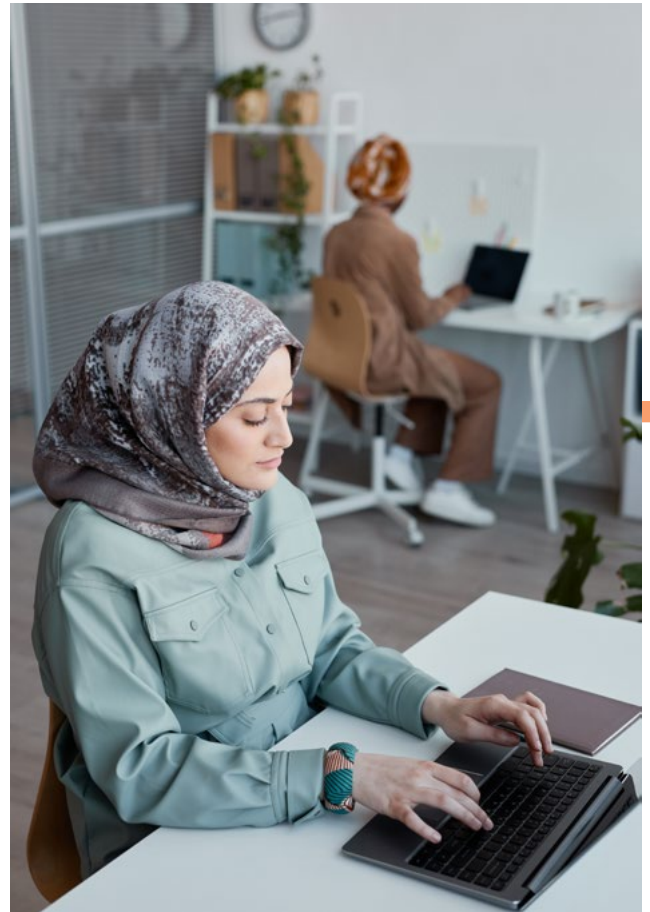
worship we practice and the legislation that corrects our perceptions and mental maps and make them positive – i.e., characterized by servitude towards God and the rejection of negative emotions, fear, weakness and anxiety!

5. Islam calls upon us to practice life positively. As we mature, learn, and acquire wisdom, our morals and souls are elevated. As we love God - His qualities, majesty and beauty - we perceive our bond towards Him, and become more positive in life. Our love for all human beings - even for all things in the universe - is increased. Our willingness and preparedness to accept beauty and majesty and virtuous morals is increased, and descends automatically from our souls. Our knowledge of God increases, as does our love for him and his beauty and His love for us.

Quranic verses:

- "Say, [O Muhammad], "Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work."" (Quran 18:103-104)
- "O People of the Scripture, there has come to you Our Messenger making clear to you much of what you used to conceal of the Scripture and overlooking much. There has come to you from Allah a light and a clear Book. By which Allah guides those who pursue His pleasure to the ways of peace and brings them out from darknesses into the light, by His permission, and guides them to a straight path." (Quran 5:15-16)
- "Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darknesses into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darknesses. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein." (Quran 2:257)
- "And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, never to emerge therefrom? Thus it has been made pleasing to the disbelievers that which they were doing." (Quran 6:122)
- "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves." (Quran 13:11)
- "O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life. And know that Allah intervenes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will be gathered." (Quran 8:24)
- "Then is one to whom the evil of his deed has been made attractive so he considers it good [like one rightly guided]? For indeed, Allah sends astray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. So do not let yourself perish over them in regret. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of what they do." (Quran 35:8)
- "Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do." (Quran 6:97)

- “[This is] a Book which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], that you might bring mankind out of darknesses into the light by permission of their Lord - to the path of the Exalted in Might, the Praiseworthy – ” (Quran 14:1)
- “There has come to you enlightenment from your Lord. So, whoever will see does so for [the benefit of] his soul, and whoever is blind [does harm] against it. And [say], "I am not a guardian over you."” (Quran 6:104)
- “Say, "Each works according to his manner, but your Lord is most knowing of who is best guided in way."” (Quran 17:84)
- “In their hearts is disease, so Allah has increased their disease; and for them is a painful punishment because they [habitually] used to lie. And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers." Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive [it] not.” (Quran 2:10-12)
- “That is because Allah would not change a favor which He had bestowed upon a people until they change what is within themselves. And indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” (Quran 8:53)
- “It will have [the consequence of] what [good] it has gained, and it will bear [the consequence of] what [evil] it has earned.” (Quran 2:286)



23

Loving the Allies of Allah

“Say, [O Muhammad], ‘I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good will through kinship.’” Ash-Shura 42:23



Love for the Prophet and his Household (as): A Path to Allah

الله

Foundation and Importance

A Divine Obligation:

Based on the verse: "Say, [O Muhammad], I do not ask you for this message any payment [offering] except appropriate affection for [my] kindred" (Ash-Shura, 23).



Proximity to Allah and Elevation in Ranks

Loving them brings us closer to Allah and raises us to the rank of the Prophet (PBUH) on the Day of Resurrection.



Instilling Divine Values

Emulating those we love subconsciously instills in us the values they embodied and defended.



Practical Manifestations of Affection

Sending Blessings upon Them

Continuously sending blessings (Salawat) upon them during free time and worship, which is an obligatory part of daily prayers.



Remembering Their Stories and Sacrifices

Drawing lessons from their heroism, most notably the immortal epic of Ashura.



Visiting Their Graves and Shrines

Recalling the values for which they sacrificed when visiting their noble shrines.





The position of the People of the House of the Prophet (p), or Ahl al-Bayt, is very lofty in the system of Islamic thought. Islam stresses the importance of linking Muslims to the people of the House (p), with Hadith al-Thaqalayn being just one example.

There are hundreds of verses and hadeeths contained in the general books of Sunni and Shiite Muslims regarding the virtues of Ahl al-Bayt (p), including the following saying of the Almighty: “Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the

[Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification.” (Quran 33:33)

Loving the great, Apostle (PBUHF) and his household (AS) is one of the most important values in Islam, like the knowledge and willpower that helps us get closer to Allah and achieve happiness and contentment. Loving them makes us want to embody the values and principles, which they embodied and defended.

It is the nature of man to emulate and follow the lead of those he loves, adores, or regards as role models. Our interaction with and sympathy for their defense of their principles and their embodiment of these principles—even though they were required to pay for it with their lives—subconsciously ingrains these principles deep in our psyche and shapes our views on life accordingly.

To the extent that we love the Great Apostle (PBUHF) and his household (AS) and interact with their memory, we transcend to Allah. In a narration in the Sahīh al Tirmidī, it is said that: the Messenger of Allah (PBUHF) took the hands of Hassan and Hussein (AS) and said: “Who

loves me, these two and their father and mother will be with me on the same rank on the Day of Resurrection.”

Muslims agree that Allah made it compulsory to love Ahl al-Bâit (the Prophet’s Household). Religious texts were unanimous on this issue. Also, in the holy Quran: “Say, [O Muhammad], “I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good will through kinship.” In another verse, “Say, “Whatever payment I might have asked of you—it is yours. My payment is only from Allah” (34:47). This love brings man closer to Allah: “Say, ‘I do not ask of you for it any payment—only that whoever wills might take to his Lord a way” (25:57).

We need to live with the love of the Great Apostle (PBUHF) and his household (AS) in our daily lives and transform this sentiment into actions or deeds because they are closest to Allah and thus their love is the clearest manifestation of our love for Allah. This will augment our feelings of love and increase our love for Allah.

One of the ways to strengthen our affection towards the Great Apostle (PBUHF) and his

household (AS) is to recite salawat (invocations to prayer) on the Prophet and Ahl al-Bâit in our spare time and during our regular prayers. Allah made these salawat parts of the mandatory daily prayers, which means that without invocation to praise the Prophet, the prayers are invalid. “Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace” (33:56).

We can also augment this love through the recurring commemorations of the Prophet and the imams at social events. This includes remembering their stories and the epic sacrifices they made for the good of humanity and for the sake of establishing divine values on Earth. The greatest of these heroic stories is the epic of Ashura, a never-ending humanitarian tale and a one-of-a-kind in human history.

We can also commemorate the Prophet and imams by visiting their shrines and mausoleums and contemplating the values they defended with their lives.



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 23

Take ten minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts. Some of the concepts match with more than one verse:

Islamic concepts:

1. The Quran mentions the virtues of the people of Ahl Al-Bayt (PBUT) to exalt their virtue and to invite people to love and follow them.
2. Loving the people of Ahl Al-Bayt (PBUT) makes us want to embody the values and principles they embodied and defended.
3. One of the ways to consolidate our bonds of love and affection to the Prophet (PBUHF) and Ahl Al-Bayt (PBUT) is to enjoin prayer upon them.
4. Loving the Prophet (PBUHF) and Ahl Al-Bayt (PBUT) is one of the most important Islamic values.
5. The people of Ahl Al-Bayt (PBUT) occupy a very high status in the system of Islamic intellectual thought.

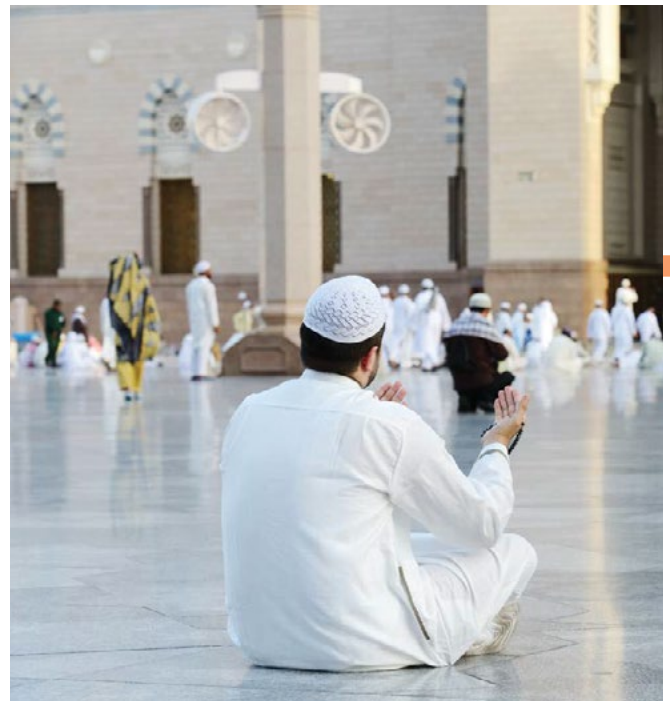
Quranic verses:

- ☐ "There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful." (Quran 9:128)
- ☐ "Say, [O Muhammad], "I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good will through kinship."" (Quran 42:23)
- ☐ "You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred. Those - He has decreed within their hearts faith and supported them

with spirit from Him. And We will admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him - those are the party of Allah. Unquestionably, the party of Allah - they are the successful." (Quran 58:22)

- "There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often." (Quran 33:21)
- "Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification." (Quran 33:33)
- "[Saying], "We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude." (Quran 76:9)
- "Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace." (Quran 33:56)

- "Your ally is none but Allah and [therefore] His Messenger and those who have believed - those who establish prayer and give zakah, and they bow [in worship]." (Quran 5:55)



24

Social Connection

“O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may ʿget toʿ know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (Surat Al-Hujurat, 13)

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الدكتور روبرت والدينجر

 Social Connection

 Watch The Video

لبيّن أن الأشخاص المرتبطين
أكثر اجتماعياً مع الأسرة
والأصدقاء والمجتمع هم
أكثر سعادة وأكثر صحة جسدياً
ويعيشون حياة أطول من
الذين هم أقل ارتباطاً

7:14

Social Communication: A Human Instinct and a Path to God

Human beings are social by nature. Communicating with others is not only a need for achieving happiness and good health, but it is also the primary arena for self-purification and spiritual elevation, making it a practical path toward God.

Section One: The Necessity of Social Life

Humans Are Social by Nature

They were created to live within a community; interaction and connection are part of the very essence of human creation.



Strong Relationships Are the Secret to Happiness and Health

Maintaining family ties and communication increase happiness, strengthen health, and prolong life, while isolation is associated with decline.



Society Is the Field for Journeying Toward God

Self-purification and practicing patience, mercy, and altruism cannot be achieved except through interaction with others.



Section Two: The Islamic Framework for Social Relationships

Islam Promotes Communication Through Collective Worship

Congregational prayer, Friday prayer, Eid prayers, and Hajj were prescribed to strengthen social bonds.



Strict Ethical Guidelines to Protect Society

Islam prohibits mockery, backbiting, envy, and arrogance to preserve healthy relationships and harmonious hearts.



Final Message:

Communication Is Not a Luxury but a Necessity and an Act of Worship. It is an innate disposition, a need, and a field for devotion and journeying toward God.



Humanity was created to live in society, for we are social beings by nature. This is because social interactions and connections are necessary to attain the purpose for which Allah created us – striving on the path to Allah. Allah, Exalted is He, said: “O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may ‘get to’ know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware.” (Surat Al-Hujurat, 13). And He said, Exalted is He: “And He is the One Who creates human beings from a ‘humble’ liquid, then establishes for them bonds of kinship and marriage.” (Surat Al-Furqan, 54). This verse clearly shows that family and social bonds are innate in us humans, and He said, Exalted is He: “We ‘alone’ have distributed their ‘very’ livelihood among them in this worldly life and raised some of them in rank above others so that some may employ others in service.” (Surat Az-Zukhruf, 32)

We can portray the importance of the social aspect of a person’s life through two different aspects:



Social life is fundamental for a person to feel calm, stable and happy

It is an innate and profound necessity in our existence, and we need to fulfill this need in order to feel calm, stable and happy, just as we need to fulfill all our other basic and innate needs.

Self-determination theory establishes the internal motives that drive a person to work on three different axes, one of which is relatedness, and it manifests in our need to belong and have connections with other people.

Regarding this, the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: "Maintaining relationships with one's kin builds [great] homes and increases lifespans, even if the person doing so is not among the righteous." He also said (PBUH): "A people can be evil and mischievous and not righteous, but if they maintain their relationships with their kin, their wealth increases and their lifespans increase, so [imagine what the rewards are] if the person doing so is righteous and pious."

This is confirmed by a Harvard study on adult life, which lasted for 75 years. The study focused on the physical and psychological aspects of 724 people. The director of the study, Dr. Robert Waldinger, says that they discovered that people who had high-quality relationships with their families, friends and society, were happier and healthier, and they live longer than people who have fewer social connections. As for the more isolated people, the study found that they tended to be less happy and their health declines quicker during their mid-age, and their brain functions decay quicker, and they live shorter lives than people who are surrounded by their loved ones.²⁴

Social life is the field in which humanity strives on the path to Allah, Exalted is He

Social life and connection are the fields in which humans can use their skills and capacities to improve them, and it is in this field that they can eliminate their weaknesses and the darkness that pull them to this

24 <https://youtu.be/wGXsbZ7ipMk>

worldly life, in order to reach a higher state and seek the path to Allah, Exalted is He.

As such, Islam entices us to have societies that are filled with love, social connection, support, compassion, and brotherhood – a society that does not raise barriers between its people, a society that is well-knit. The Prophet (PBUH) said: “The believers, in their mutual love, compassion, and sympathy are like a single body; if one of its organs suffers, the whole body will respond to it with sleeplessness and fever.” And Allah, Exalted is He, said: “And hold firmly to the rope of Allah and do not be divided.” (Surat Aal-Imran, 103)

This is why Islam provided a lot of rules and laws that promote social bonds to elevate humanity towards Allah, Exalted is He. Islam provided us with congregational prayers and strongly incited us to pray in a congregation: “When you ‘O Prophet’ are ‘campaigning’ with them and you lead them in prayer” (Surat An-Nisaa, 102), and Islam mandates the Friday prayer in a congregation: “O believers! When the call to prayer is made on Friday, then proceed ‘diligently’ to the

remembrance of Allah and leave off ‘your’ business.” (Surat Al-Jumuah, 9), along with the two Eid prayers, and it mandated pilgrimage, fasting, giving alms and many other Islamic laws and rituals to attain a stronger social bond among Muslims, and a stronger connection and more support among Muslims in society. “He brought their hearts together. Had you spent all the riches on earth, you could not have united their hearts. But Allah has united them. Indeed, He is Almighty, All-Wise.” (Surat Al-Anfal, 63)

The Islamic Sharia also enticed us to care for our neighbors, and it is reported that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: “Gabriel kept on commanding me to care for our neighbors to the point I thought he was going to include them as inheritors.” And Islam also enticed us to have friends and brethren. Imam Ali (AS) said in Nahj Al-Balagha: “The weakest of people are those who are not able to obtain brethren, and even weaker are those who lose the brethren they made.” Islam also encourages us to visit our brethren and family, for the Prophet (PBUH) said: “He who visits his brethren in their house, Allah,

Exalted is He, says to him: ‘you are my guest and I will care for you.’ Islam also emphasized the obligatory nature of maintaining bonds with one’s kin, and it considered breaking of family bonds one of the major sins. “Now if you ‘hypocrites’ turn away, perhaps you would then spread corruption throughout the land and sever your ‘ties of’ kinship! These are the ones who Allah has condemned, deafening them and blinding their eyes.” (Surat Muhammad, 22-23), and Islam obliged us to treat our parents well and it considered doing so equivalent to worshipping Allah, Exalted is He: “or your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And honour your parents.” (Surat Al-Israa, 23)

The Shariah also set many bounds for different relationships, and it prohibited many behavioral sins that destroy social bonds, considering some of them major sins, like arrogance, envy, slander, false testimony, backbiting, cursing, talking ill of others, comparing oneself to others in accordance to one’s titles, harming believers and revealing their secrets, among others. For example, Allah, Exalted is He, said: “O believers! Do not

let some ‘men’ ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let ‘some’ women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the ‘true’ wrongdoers.” (Surat Al-Hujurat, 11)





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 24

Take five minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts.

Quranic verses:

1. "O believers! Do not let some 'men' ridicule others, they may be better than them, nor let 'some' women ridicule other women, they may be better than them. Do not defame one another, nor call each other by offensive nicknames. How evil it is to act rebelliously after having faith! And whoever does not repent, it is they who are the 'true' wrongdoers." (Surat Al-Hujurat, 11)
2. "When you 'O Prophet' are 'campaigning' with them and you lead them in prayer" (Surat An-Nisaa, 102)
3. "Now if you 'hypocrites' turn away, perhaps you would then spread corruption throughout the land and sever your 'ties of' kinship! These are the ones who Allah has condemned, deafening them and blinding their eyes." (Surat Muhammad, 22-23),
4. "O humanity! Indeed, We created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may 'get to' know one another. Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly All-Knowing, All-Aware." (Surat Al-Hujurat, 13)
5. And He is the One Who creates human beings from a 'humble' liquid, then establishes for them bonds of kinship and marriage." (Surat Al-Furqan, 54)
6. "He brought their hearts together. Had you spent all the riches in the earth, you could not have united their hearts. But Allah has united them. Indeed, He is Almighty, All-Wise." (Surat Al-Anfal, 63)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ Islam calls for a loving society with compassion, support, and brotherhood, where there are no barriers among the members of society, leading to a unified society.
- ☐ Familial and social bonds are part of humanity's innate nature.
- ☐ Allah created rules for many types of relationships, and He prohibited some societal sins, considering being major sins.
- ☐ Many Islamic laws and rituals were made to tighten and improve societal bonds.
- ☐ Social life is an innate feature in humans, for we are social beings by nature.
- ☐ Allah emphasized the obligatory nature of maintaining family bonds and He considered severing these bonds to be a major sin.



25

Carrying the Message of Goodness to the People

"I only intend reform as much as I am able.
And my success is not but through Allah.
Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return."
Hud 11:88

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Reform: The Role of the Believer in Building Society

From the divine perspective, a believer's success is not achieved by isolating himself, but by carrying a message of goodness and reform to society. This mission is based on essential Islamic principles that guide his interaction with the world around him

The righteous believer is not isolated

Self-centered withdrawal is considered a failure in divine assessment

True success: carrying the message of goodness

A successful person is a mission-driven individual who cares about the affairs of his society

﴿ I only desire reform as much as I am able ﴾

Surah Hud, verse 88

Loyalty and disassociation

Loyalty to the values of goodness and its symbols

And disassociation from the values of corruption and injustice

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong

A supervisory and corrective system to protect society from deviation and corruption

The goal: a reformed nation

Islam aims to form a nation whose constant practice is reform, not just scattered reformers





On the divine scale, even a “good believer” will be considered to have failed if they are cocooned and self-centered. It is a condition of being a successful person, that we care about the human communities around us and that we help them find the right path by patiently advising them about what is right.

“By time, Indeed, mankind is in loss, Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience” (103:1-3).

Though everything Allah says is undoubtedly true and correct, Allah used a number of linguistic tools to emphasize this point, not to mention dedicating a full surah to it. This illustrates just how important and significant this issue is.

According to the divine concepts, a successful person is one who carries the message and mission of Allah to everyone around them. “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and prohibit what is vice and believe in Allah” (3:110).

Bearing the message of goodness and righteousness for humankind releases one from the trap of the self-centered state. By caring about the others, a person breaks free of the cocoon of ego and spontaneously embodies the values of good and virtue.

That is why we should not isolate ourselves in this life, but rather, we should do good towards everyone, starting with our families, spouses, and children, and then scaling up to the global society as a whole.

Loyalty and Disassociation

Not all ideas and beliefs we assume are positive are going to make us happy. These ideas have to be harmonious with the soul and our nature in order for us to feel calm and happy. Otherwise, our unconscious mind will continue to hurt and feel pain.

Because our unconscious mind registers everything that happens to us, whether we realize it or react to it, we should make sure that our environment is healthy, positive, and constructive, in addition to continuing to seek knowledge and correcting our convictions. So that we can ensure that, all inputs to our unconscious mind are positive and aid us in cementing positive beliefs.

But, in this complicated world, this is practically impossible, so we must train our unconscious mind to react positively to good events in our lives and positive and healthy inputs that serve our natures and to react negatively, through repulsion and disgust, to bad events in our lives and negative inputs that ruin our

minds and souls. This is what we call “loyalty and dissociation” in our Islamic thought.

Indeed, the process of reform and change is bound to fail or be fruitless if it does not arise truthfully and sincerely from the reformer. This applies at both an individual and a community level.

Islam does not aim to have groups of reformers here and there but to create whole nations of them: [“There has to be a nation among you summoning to the good, bidding what is right, and forbidding what is wrong. It is they who are the felicitous.”](#) (Quran 3:104)

As such, Islam encourages us to have the movement of reformation within us, within our hearts. This gives rise to the need to entrench loyalty—in terms of intentions and deeds—towards all good human values and their symbols (loyalty) and to entrench rejection of corruption and all types of injustice and their symbols, even if they are the closest people to us (disassociation).

The aim of disassociation is to engender a lack of loyalty, support, affection and love for the enemies of God. “You will not find a people believing in Allah and the Last Day endearing those who oppose Allah and His Apostle even though they were their own parents, or children, or brothers, or kinsfolk.” (Quran 58:22)

However, benevolence towards those who are not enemies of Allah and who do not fight Islam and its symbols is recommended, even if they are atheists. “Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes that you deal with them with kindness and justice. Indeed, Allah loves the just. Allah forbids you only in regard to those who made war against you on account of religion and expelled you from your homes and supported [others] in your expulsion, that you make friends with them, and whoever makes friends with them—it is they who are the wrongdoers.” (Quran 60: 8-9)

This Hadith, as well as tens of others like it, is the entrenchment by the Holy Prophet (PBUHF) of the principle of loyalty to Ahl ul-

Bayt (AS) and disassociation from their enemies. This is one of the key elements in establishing the Culture of Awaiting Imam Mahdi (AS) in the conscience of Muslims. It is narrated in Musnad Ahmad, Al-Mustadrak alaa al-Sahihain and in other books that: “The Prophet (PBUHF) looked at Ali, Hassan, Hussein and Fatima and said, “I am at war to whoever is at war with you and I am at peace to those who are at peace with you.”

The “promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice”

At a societal level, the promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice is a vital system of regulation and correction due to its effectiveness and high flexibility. These render it suitable for being practiced in a variety of social circumstances, thereby preventing society from deviating from the line of Allah and freedom and indulging in darkness and corruption. Its suitability for this role is primarily because of its focus on appraising

individual infractions The Almighty said: “And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.” (Aal-Imran, 104).

Imam Ali (AS) said: “You shall enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, or Allah will unleash upon you a calamity that will confuse the wise men among you and then Allah will grant your evil people power above you and your righteous men will pray and they will not be answered. What comes after that is a painful punishment.”

The “promotion of virtue and the prevention of vice” is at the core of the epic of Ashura and its spirit, as explained by the hero of the event, Imam Hussein (AS), when he said: “I only went out to seek reforms in the nation of my grandfather, the Messenger of Allah (PBUHF); I want to enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil.” It is also the foundation and spirit of the culture of awaiting Imam Mahdi (AS), as we will cover in the following lessons.

However, it is not a negative and violent exercise, as we see in some of the countries that claim to embrace this culture; in fact, its true form is far from that! It is positive and constructive, filled with mercy and a desire to do good by others. “It is by Allah’s mercy that you are gentle to them; and had you been harsh and hardhearted, surely they would have scattered from around you.” (Quran 3:159) The Almighty also says: “Invite them to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice and dispute with them in a manner that is best.” (Quran 16:125).





Essay Activity (External)

Read the optional reading section of “The Islamic vision of life” and write a research paper (between 500 and 1000 words) discussing a practical approach to attaining the four Islamic strategic goals that are listed.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 25

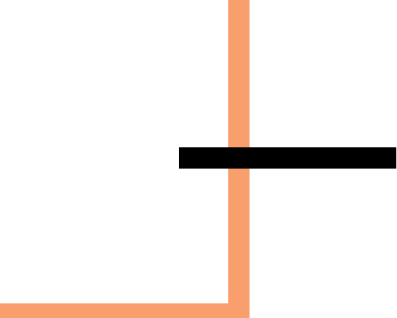
Take ten minutes to match the following Quranic verses with the correct interpretation:

Quranic verses:

1. "Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly. Allah only forbids you from those who fight you because of religion and expel you from your homes and aid in your expulsion - [forbids] that you make allies of them. And whoever makes allies of them, then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Quran 60:8-9)
2. "No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then We are going to give him a great reward." (Quran 4:114)
3. "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful." (Quran 3:104)
4. "By time, indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds and advised each other to truth and advised each other to patience." (Quran 103:1-3)
5. "You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kindred." (Quran 58:22)
6. "O you who have believed, do not take your fathers or your brothers as allies if they have preferred disbelief over belief. And whoever does so among you - then it is those who are the wrongdoers." (Quran :23)
7. "Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best." (Quran 16:125)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ The ‘Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice’ is not a negative and violent exercise, as we see in some of the countries that claim to embrace this culture; rather, its true form is positive and constructive, filled with mercy and a desire to do good by others.
- ☐ Islam is not aimed at establishing groups of reformers here and there, but rather at building a nation of reformers that is constantly reforming and changing.
- ☐ God urges us to carry the message of good and good among all people.
- ☐ The aim of disassociation is to engender a lack of loyalty, support, affection and love for the enemies of God.
- ☐ On the divine scale, even a “good believer” will be considered to have failed if they are cocooned and self-centered.
- ☐ Benevolence towards those who are not enemies of Allah and who do not fight Islam and its symbols is recommended, even if they are atheists.
- ☐ It is very wrong for believers to take non-believers as their friends and allies, even if these non-believers are their fathers and brothers.



“but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful.” (Al-Hashr 59:9)

26

Giving and Altruism

Giving and Altruism: Paths of Proximity to Allah

The text explains that giving and altruism are two ways to overcome self-centeredness, which brings happiness and spiritual elevation. It presents multiple forms of giving, starting from financial charity and reaching kind words and responding to harm with goodness, as practical paths to draw closer to Allah.

Section One: Financial Charity: A Practical Practice for Purifying the Soul



Going Beyond Traditional Giving

Bank transfers may deprive us of feeling the joy of giving.
Connect your giving to your daily life.



Connect Your Charity to the Events of Your Life

With every challenge or success, give charity to a poor family you personally know.



The Goal: Connecting Life to Allah

This practice purifies the soul and gradually elevates it toward Allah, even if you do not feel it.

Section Two: Other Forms of Giving with Greater Impact



Charity Through Kind Words

It costs nothing, but it gives others comfort and strength in a world full of difficulties.



Charity Through Time and Expertise

Donate part of your time and professional expertise to help those who cannot afford its costs.



Repelling Evil with Goodness

This is one of the hardest forms of giving. It trains the soul and frees it from selfishness. Whoever does it is "one of great fortune."



Our pursuit of fulfilling our bodily needs (like eating and mating) and of developing our capabilities enforces our love of the self and self-centrism. Allah, on the other hand, does not want us to fall prey to this trap; he wants us to avoid becoming our own barrier to Him, as happened with Satan. Therefore, Allah commands us to give and be altruistic, “But give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are in privation. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul—it is those who will be the successful” (59:9).

Imam al Ṣadiq (AS) said, “Fulfilling the need of a believer is more beloved to Allah than performing twenty times the pilgrimage, on each of which, he spends one hundred thousand [dīnar]”.

When we undertake pilgrimage, we partake in a great act of worship lasting several days and become very close to Allah. However, relieving another believer of their problem or need—even if this does not take more than a few minutes—is worthier and more valuable to Allah than those twenty rounds of pilgrimage.

Giving and altruism plays a large role in bringing happiness to humans and transcending them towards Allah. It plays a key role in helping us break free of our self-centrism and annihilate ourselves in the love of Allah. “And spend [in the way of Allah]; it is better for your selves. And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul—it is those who will be the successful” (64:16).

Many effective charity bodies work to spend money wisely and improve the channels via which charity work occurs. All we need to do is transfer money to their bank accounts. However, while this mechanism is convenient, it does not allow us to enjoy and feel the process of giving.

As such, I recommend that aside from this regular contribution to charity, we do another beautiful thing to help purify us. This notion is derived from the following verse: “O you who have believed, when you [wish to] privately consult the Messenger, present before your consultation a charity. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not [the means]—then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (58:12).

What I am suggesting is to commit to helping one poor family with whose circumstances you are familiar. You should agree with the head of that family that you would gather contributions on their behalf and then hand it over to them—once a month, for example.

As you struggle in your daily life, you may come across challenges or problems and pray to Allah for help and relief. It would be beneficial if every time you did so, you took an amount of money and set it aside for charity or for that poor family that you have agreed to help. You might keep it in a different section of your purse or wallet, or you might keep it in a drawer or other safe place to help you keep track of how much you are saving. Later on, you can collect the money and hand it over to those in need.

Conversely, whenever something good happens in your life, you should express your gratitude to Allah through the same process. It does not matter if the amount of money you set aside is big or small; Allah appreciates the alms (sadaqat) even if they are meagre. “Allah does not charge a soul except [with that within] its capacity” (2:286).

The idea is that you link the challenges and successes in your life with Allah and giving for the sake of His love. This will help, gradually, to purify your psyche and transcend you towards Allah, even if you do not feel it.

There is another type of spending that does not cost you anything, yet it has a great effect, and that is the good word. The great Apostle (PBUHF), in his commandment to Abu Dhar, said, “O Abu Dhar, the good word is alms.”

In the midst of our contemporary reality and its many conflicts, challenges, and psychological ailments, people—all of them—are in dire need of a good word from an honest and loving heart to help them feel comfortable and serene.

Though you may not directly solve anybody’s problems with your niceties, these honest, well-intentioned words will find their way into the hearts of others and give them a sense of comfort, power, and the insight to overcome the original problem. “Have you not considered how Allah presents an example, [making] a good word like a good tree, whose root is

firmly fixed and its branches [high] in the sky? (24) It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And Allah presents examples for the people that perhaps they will be reminded (25) And the example of a bad word is like a bad tree, uprooted from the surface of the earth, not having any stability (26)” (14:24-26).

If you are a specialist in a service that people need, you may decide to allocate part of your time to free consultations, particularly for those who cannot afford to pay for them in the private sector. It would be even better if you were to do this in the mosque, so that your services and help are linked to Allah.

The toughest thing about the “good word paradigm” is to get used to responding to bad words with good ones. If someone insults you with bad words, you should respond by being good to them: “And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord, and establish prayer and spend from what We have provided for them secretly and publicly and prevent evil with good—those will have the good consequence of [this] home” (13:22).

This involves a process of self-discipline and breaking free of the control and dominance of evil so that you can transcend towards Allah without being bound and shackled by yourself, what you lack and your helplessness. Consider how Allah describes those who are able to achieve it: they are the owners of great fortune. Do we not want to be among them? “And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend (34) But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good]” (41:34-35)





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 26

Take ten minutes to match up the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts::

Quranic verses:

1. "And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces [dissension] among them. Indeed, Satan is ever, to mankind, a clear enemy." (Quran 17:53)
2. "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah - who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend out of what We have provided for them," (Quran 2:2-3)
3. "Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing." (Quran 9:103)
4. "And whoever is protected from the stinginess of his soul - it is those who will be the successful." (Quran 64:16)
5. "Satan threatens you with poverty and orders you to immorality, while Allah promises you forgiveness from Him and bounty. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing." (Quran 2:286)
6. "But none is granted it except those who are patient, and none is granted it except one having a great portion [of good]." (Quran 41:35)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ God commands us to speak to others with the best of words in order that we do not give the devil a chance to seduce people and change their hearts.
- ☐ Alms and the act of spending are necessary to purify humans and bring them closer to God.

- ☐ Giving and spending plays a very big role in bringing happiness to humans and elevating them towards God. It also plays a major role in helping us get rid of our self-centeredness.
- ☐ If people want to be honest and spend money in aid of good, Satan works to make them afraid of poverty.
- ☐ The most difficult aspect of almsgiving is the good word and good deed – that is, responding to those who would harm you with kindness. These are the people God described as having great fortune.
- ☐ Spending money for the sake of Allah is one of the five qualities of the righteous.



27

Arrogance and Relying on Our Own Capacities

“Once you make a decision, put your trust in Allah. Surely Allah loves those who trust in Him.” (Surat Aal Imran, 159)



A video player interface featuring a QR code with a gold 'A' logo in the center. To the right of the QR code is a cartoon illustration of a man in a yellow sweater pointing at a star, with other hands visible in the background. A black button with a red play icon and the text 'Watch The Video' is positioned above the illustration. At the bottom, a white title bar contains the text 'Arrogance and Relying on Our Own Capacities' next to a red square icon. The video duration '16:35' is shown in the bottom right corner.







 **Arrogance and Relying on Our Own Capacities**

16:35

Self-Confidence or Trust in God?

An Islamic Perspective

Section 1: The Illusion of Self-Confidence

Self-Confidence: Arrogance and Delusion



It ignores external forces, the soul inclined to evil, and satanic whispers.

Self-Knowledge Can Be Deceptive

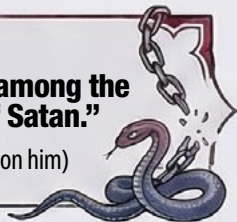


Just One Factor in the Game of Destiny

Our abilities alone do not guarantee success; many factors lie beyond our control.

“Self-confidence is among the strongest traps of Satan.”

Imam Ali (peace be upon him)



Section 2: The Reality of Trust in God

The Solution: Determination with Trust

Make your decision, then rely on God; indeed, He loves those who trust in Him.



True honor lies in servitude to God.

“My God, it is enough honor for me to be Your servant, and enough pride for me that You are my Lord.” – Imam Ali (peace be upon him). A Prophetic Supplication: Do Not Leave Me to Myself

“My Lord, do not leave me to myself even for the blink of an eye.”

The Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)





When you begin striving for perfection and obtaining great characteristics as a result of your effort and dedication, and as Allah grants you bounties, you immediately begin obtaining a higher level when compared to your peers, at least in terms of the obvious characteristics.. This leads to you hearing and receiving a lot of praise from the people around you, which leads to you feeling proud of your skills and characteristics and wanting to show them off. Over time, arrogance and pride take over your heart. These two traits go hand-in-hand with egoism; they are the fatal enemies of humanity. They are capable of destroying us from the inside. They can destroy everything beautiful around us, both in this world and in the afterlife. That is why

Allah strongly admonished humans for these traits, and He said, Exalted is He: **“And do not turn your nose up to people, nor walk pridefully upon the earth. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful.”** (Surat Luqman, 18)

Human history shows us that many of the people who are described as “great” reached their demise when they started feeling that they were great. That is why Islamic doctrine teaches us to be humble and to believe that our greatness comes from being subservient to Allah, exalted be He. Notice how Imam Ali (AS) says in his supplication: **“It is enough of an honor for me to worship You. It is enough of a source of pride for You to be my Lord.”**²⁵

As long as pride and arrogance do not overtake you, then your continuous success in a bunch of traits, like physical strength, intelligence, wisdom, knowledge, leadership, or anything else, makes you feel sure of your capabilities, and you can use these skills and traits to obtain your goals. We assume that confidence

²⁵ Ibn Abi al-Hadid, Sharh Nahj al-Balaghah (Commentary on Nahj al-Balaghah), vol. 20, p. 255.

in oneself is high when it is founded on objective grounds. However, is this possible? Or is this just a false construct?

There is no doubt that it is false, despite what self-improvement books claim (that it is very important and fundamental in order to succeed). How can we objectively depend on our knowledge, and ourselves assuming that everything we know is true and objective despite everything we learned about the human psyche in the previous chapters? We saw that 95% of people believe they are aware of themselves, but more than 85% of them are lying to themselves.

If we are part of the small minority that truly understands their capacities in an objective and precise manner, it is still true that we are but one factor in everything destiny brings our way. There are many objective and external factors can move us in different directions, sometimes in a direction opposite to the one we are working towards, so that's why it is possible that we never attain what we want.

Believing in your abilities and believing that they are sufficient to achieve your ambitions and goals while ignoring the fact that external factors have a real impact on your ability to do so, as does your proclivity for evil and the Devil's whispers. . Allah, Exalted is He, warns us against doing so: [“And I do not seek to free myself from blame, for indeed the soul is ever inclined to evil, except those shown mercy by my Lord. Surely my Lord is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful.”](#) (Surat Yusuf, 53). The Greatest Prophet (PBUH) said: “Oh Lord, do not leave me to my own devices for a blink of a second, for leaving me to my own devices is closer to evil and farther away from goodness.”²⁶, and Imam Ali (AS) said: [“Believing \[in your own capacities alone\] is one of the surest opportunities of Satan”](#).²⁷

Given that this is the reality, there is a realistic, objective, and correct alternative to this self-deceitful confidence in oneself. This alternative allows a person to strive in life with all the power, might, and confidence

26 Al-Hurr al-Amili, Wasa'il al-Shi'ah, Ahl al-Bayt edition, vol. 19, p. 261.

27 M. Mohammadi Rayshahri, The Scale of Wisdom: A Compendium of Shi'a Hadith (Mizan al-Hikmah), vol. 4, p. 3665.

that is possible, with no fear or worrying, regardless of how the external factors play out or how the forces that seek to push a person away from their goals work. This alternative fills the heart with strength, dedication, and conviction. What is this alternative?

Let us construct it in terms of several parts, like a puzzle, to make the alternative as clear as possible and present it in the most beautiful fashion.

Part One: There is no alternative to objective and scientific knowledge.

Imam Ali (AS) says to his companion, Kumail, "Oh Kumail, there is no step you can take that does not require knowledge."²⁸ The basis of any action in this life depends on objective knowledge and not ignorance or delusion, regardless of the excuse that might make it

seem worthwhile. As such, we have to strive as much as possible, in accordance with our capacities and skills that Allah has gifted us, to use this objective knowledge to construct a plan for our lives, without ceding to psychological pressures. "And proclaim the blessings of your Lord." (Surat Ad-Duha, 11) Consider what the Prophet Joseph (AS) said to the Pharaoh: "Joseph proposed, "Put me in charge of the store-houses of the land, for I am truly reliable and adept." (Surat Yusuf, 55).

We have to know our strengths and weaknesses in order to achieve our goals and protect ourselves from any threats that may arise. This is what we call a SWOT analysis in strategic planning. But before doing so, we need to specify our goals. "Whoever acts without prescience is like the walker without way; the speed of walking does not increase him but farness," said Imam Jaafar As-Sadiq (AS).²⁹

28 Ibn Shu'ba al-Harrani, Tuhaf al-Uqul: The Masterpieces of the Mind, p. 171.

29 Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulayni, Al-Kafi, revised and annotated by Ali Akbar al-Ghaffari, 5th ed. (Tehran: Dar al-Kutub al-Islamiyyah, 1363 SH), vol. 1, p. 43.

Part Two: Excessive self-confidence is not backed by objective knowledge.

Our capacities and our knowledge of our strengths and characteristics that we worked on getting, do increase the possibility of obtaining success with our goals, in an objective manner as dictated by the natural laws that Allah created, but they do not guarantee it. This is because our capacities are only one factor among many, and there are many external factors that objectively keep us from attaining our goals. As we mentioned before, if all the external factors and forces pushed in a certain direction and the Creator, Exalted is He, wanted another direction, Allah's Will shall always prevail. "All it takes, when He wills something 'to be', is simply to say to it: "Be!" And it is!" (Surat Ya Sin, 82). He, Exalted, also said: "O humanity! A lesson is set forth, so listen to it 'carefully': those 'idols' you invoke besides Allah can never create 'so much as' a fly, even if they 'all' were to come together for that. And if a fly were to snatch anything away

from them, they cannot 'even' retrieve it from the fly. How powerless are those who invoke and those invoked!" (Surat Al-Hajj, 73)

Part Three: Rely on Allah, and entrust your affairs to Him, alone.

We mentioned in our previous lessons that proximity to Allah means obtaining two aspects. The first is to increase our capacities and characteristics (our existence). The second is to increase our perception of our subservience to Allah and that we need Allah, while He does not need us. "O humanity! It is you who stand in need of Allah, but Allah 'alone' is the Self-Sufficient, Praiseworthy." (Surat Fatir, 15). That's why Allah enticed us to improve our skills and characteristics (the first aspect) through our strife and hard work in this world, through the laws of cause and effect (first part) and He obliged us to only rely on Him - "Do not take besides Me any other Trustee of Affairs" (Surat Al-Israa, 2) - to cement the aspect of subservience to Him in our hearts (part 2).

So instead of trusting yourself and your capacities and the other worldly factors to achieve your goals, Allah wants us to rely on Him and entrust our affairs to Him, alone. [“Whoever desires the reward of this world, then ‘let them know that’ with Allah are the rewards of this world and the Hereafter. And Allah is All-Hearing, All-Seeing.”](#) (Surat An-Nisaa, 134), while also making a reasonable effort to attain our goals. The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: [“Make a rational choice and then depend on Allah”](#), for He is the Cause of all causes and He is Omnipotent. [“Say, ‘Nothing will ever befall us except what Allah has destined for us. He is our Protector.’ So in Allah let the believers put their trust.”](#) (Surat At-Tawbah, 51).

We have to trust Allah and be certain that He is always with us, supporting us for our benefit. These benefits might manifest themselves as suffering and catastrophes sometimes, but regardless of how much we suffer in this world, and no matter how many doors close on our path, we should never lose faith in Allah and we should always be certain that He, Exalted is He, will never leave us to

our own devices. [“He has taken upon Himself to be Merciful.”](#) (Surat Al-Anaam, 12)

Entrusting your affairs to Allah and relying on Him, Exalted is He, is the secret to having strength in your heart and having a majestic dedication and calmness and greatness, which differentiates a believer who is truly connected to Allah from the others. Notice the trust and calmness the Prophet Moses (AS) had in Allah when he and his people were besieged by Pharaoh’s troops and the sea, so his people said: [“We are overtaken for sure.”](#) (Surat Ash-Shu’ara, 61), so [“Moses reassured ‘them’, ‘Absolutely not! My Lord is certainly with me— He will guide me.’”](#) (Surat Ash-Shu’ara, 62). Imam Ali (AS) said: [“The basis of strength in the heart is relying on Allah.”](#)³⁰

As such, the believer, through their trust in Allah and their reliance on Him, feels greatness and strength and does not despair when the challenges pile up on them, since they are certain Allah will be there for them, and they are satisfied with what He predestines. These

30 M. Mohammadi Rayshahri, *The Scale of Wisdom: A Compendium of Shi’a Hadith* (Mizan al-Hikmah), vol. 3, p. 2617.

believers fully entrust their affairs to Allah. Allah, Exalted is He, said: “Do not falter or grieve, for you will have the upper hand, if you are ‘true’ believers.” (Surat Aal-Imran, 139). He also said, Exalted is He: “But all honour and power belongs to Allah, His Messenger, and the believers, yet the hypocrites do not know.” (Surat Al-Munafiqun, 8).

It is important to note that this feeling does not arise from the conviction that Allah is going to give the believer the worldly goals they aspire to obtain. Instead, Allah grants them something much greater than that, because the believer is certain that Allah will choose the best course of actions for them, even if that means their life in this world is going to be apparently miserable. Fatima Az-Zahraa (AS) said: “He who rises towards Allah with his most devout servitude, will receive from Allah, Exalted is He, his best interests.”³¹

31 M. Mohammadi Rayshahri, The Scale of Wisdom: A Compendium of Shi’a Hadith (Mizan al-Hikmah), vol. 2, p. 882.

Part Four: Humility before Allah

The characteristics you have, your skills – regardless of how you got them, be it through genetics, inheritance, education, or your effort, or through luck – are gifts from Allah to you, and they should be treated similarly to how you treat your position at work in this world. That is, these gifts are a responsibility as much as they are a source of joy. Your subservience to Allah should match your characteristics and skills, and you have the obligation to use them in His service. Imam Ali (AS) said: “Alms are due on everything, and the alms of the mind is tolerating ignorant people.”³²

As such, if you do not act diligently in accordance with your skills and characteristics, you have acted against what it means to be subservient to Allah, and this is what makes you feel depressed and humble on the inside. The weight of this responsibility and the fear of not carrying it out adequately pushes you even

32 M. Mohammadi Rayshahri, The Scale of Wisdom: A Compendium of Shi’a Hadith (Mizan al-Hikmah), vol. 2, p. 1151

more in the direction of enjoying proximity to Allah and striving on His path and thanking Him for His blessing and bounties for you. Of course, this proximity will be reflected in you having even more blessings and continuing to escalate on the path of self-honesty and proximity to Allah. *"If you are grateful, I will certainly give you more."* (Surat Ibrahim, 7). Notice Imam Sajjad's (AS) Supplication of Makarem Al-Akhlaq: *"O Allah [...] Raise me not a single degree with people unless You have lowered me an equal amount, within myself. Let there not occur any outward honor for me, unless there has occurred an inner degradation of an equal amount, within myself."*

Regardless of how great our faith in Allah is, we are always lacking in our carrying out of our subservience and worship to Allah and praising Him for His great blessings, even though Allah, through His compassion and His mercy, accepts the smallest of actions from us humans. Imam Hussain (AS) says in his supplication for the Day of 'Arafah: *"(By all that I bear witness) that if I try my best and strive throughout all ages and all times, if I live them, to properly thank only one of Your favors, I will not be able to do that,*





except through a favor of Yours, which also requires me to thank You for it, once again with new thanking and with praise that is newly acquired and newly prepared.”

This creed and understanding means your traits and skills cannot fill you with pride and arrogance, but rather with humility towards Allah and fear of Allah, Exalted is He. Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen (AS) said in one of his supplications: “My God, to You I complain of a soul commanding to evil, rushing to offenses, eager to disobey You, and exposing itself to Your anger. It takes me on the roads of disasters, it makes me the easiest of perishers before You; many its pretexts, drawn out its

expectations; when evil touches it, it is anxious, when good touches it, grudging; inclining to play and diversion, full of heedlessness and inattention.” (Munajat Ash-Shakin)

Part Five: Being Humble before other people

This means to not feel that you are above others, despite all the traits and skills you have been given, despite all your achievements, and despite what makes your soul, heart, mind, or body different. It also means to not feel that you are above others, despite how evil and deficient others are from your point of view.

The reason for this humility is that Allah's standard for elevating the status of one person in His sight, above others, is righteousness, as He, Exalted is He, says: "Surely the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous among you. Allah is truly all-powerful and all-knowing." (Al Hugarat, 13) As such, the traits and characteristics and blessings you've been given are not a reflection of how elevated you are in the sight of Allah, for He grants blessing to everyone – Muslims and disbelievers alike – out of generosity and compassion. "We provide both the former and the latter from the bounty of your Lord. And the bounty of your Lord can never be withheld." (Surat al-Israa, 20)

The measure of a person's elevation in the sight of Allah is in their righteousness, so that means, objectively, how hard they strive to attain obedience and subservience to Allah, and the most important aspect of that is the intention (consciousness) that drives a person to exert any effort.

As such, you might be certain that you are more knowledgeable, cultured, generous, and that you serve other people. However,

you can never be certain that you are more elevated in Allah's sight, because even if it seems like the other person does less than you, it might be the case that their mental, genetically, and educational composition - or any other environmental, mental or physical factor - means that the effort they carry out is way greater than the effort you carry out to avoid slipping down an evil path, or to force themselves to carry out a small good action. Perhaps through this, a person like that has a greater standing in the sight of Allah, despite any apparent deficiencies. The Holy Quran mentions some people in hell saying: "The tyrants will ask 'one another', 'But why do we not see those we considered to be lowly? Were we wrong in mocking them 'in the world'? Or do our eyes 'just' fail to see them 'in the Fire'?'" (Surat Sad, 62-73). Also, Imam Ali (AS) said: "Allah has concealed four things in four [...] and He has concealed His favored servants among us all, so do not treat any servant of Allah as if they were insignificant, for perhaps they are His favored servant and you do not know."³³

33 Al-Mirjahani, Misbah al-Balaghah (Mustadrak Nahj al-Balaghah), vol. 3, p. 187.



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson

Take ten minutes to match each of the Quranic verses with one of the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

1. The Greatest Prophet (PBUH) said: "Oh Lord, do not leave me to my own devices for a blink of a second, for leaving me to my own devices is closer to evil, and farther away from goodness."
2. "And do not turn your nose up to people, nor walk pridefully upon the earth. Surely Allah does not like whoever is arrogant, boastful." (Surat Luqman, 18)
3. "He has taken upon Himself to be Merciful." (Surat Al-Anaam, 12)
4. "And I do not seek to free myself from blame, for indeed the soul is ever inclined to evil, except those shown mercy by my Lord. Surely my Lord is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful." (Surat Yusuf, 53)
5. Imam Ali (AS) said: "It is enough of an honor for me to worship You. It is enough of a source of pride for You to be my Lord."
6. "Put me in charge of the store-houses of the land, for I am truly reliable and adept." (Surat Yusuf, 55).
7. "O humanity! A lesson is set forth, so listen to it carefully: those idols you invoke besides Allah can never create so much as a fly, even if they all were to come together for that. And if a fly were to snatch anything away from them, they cannot if a fly were to snatch anything away from them, they cannot of those idols you invoke". Surat Al-Hajj, 73)
8. "Absolutely not! My Lord is certainly with me—He will guide me." (Surat Ash-Shu'ara, 62)
9. "Say, "Nothing will ever befall us except what Allah has destined for us. He is our Protector." So in Allah let the believers put their trust." (Surat At-Tawbah, 51).

10. "Do not falter or grieve, for you will have the upper hand, if you are 'true' believers." (Surat Aal-Imran, 139)
11. "We provide both the former and the latter from the bounty of your Lord. And the bounty of your Lord can never be withheld." (Surat al-Israa, 20)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ Trusting your affairs to Allah and relying on Him, Exalted is He, is the secret to having a strong heart, dedication and calmness.
- ☐ Instead of relying on yourself, your possessions, and worldly causes to achieve your goals, Allah wants us to rely solely on Him.
- ☐ Your self-confidence and your trust in your capacity to attain your goals and aspirations is a type of arrogance, delusion and ignorance, and Allah warns us to not fall in this trap.
- ☐ The blessings and skills that Allah gave you are not a sign of your standing or elevation in Allah's sight, for Allah grants blessings to everyone, both Muslims and disbelievers – out of generosity and compassion.
- ☐ A person who places their trust in Allah and relies on Him feels great and strong, and does not worry when faced with many challenges, for a believer has certainty that Allah is doing what is best, and is satisfied with His Destiny, and fully cedes control of their life to Him, Exalted is He.
- ☐ Arrogance, pride and egoism go hand-in-hand, and they are great enemies of humanity and are very dangerous, for they are able to destroy us from the inside, and destroy everything that is beautiful around us, in this world and in the Afterlife. That is why Allah warned us from these three things.

- ☐ Islam entices us to know our strengths and skills, as well as what Allah has given us, objectively and without delusion, in order to build a proper strategy for our lives.
- ☐ Regardless of how much we suffer in this life, and regardless of how many doors close on our path, we should not lose trust in Allah, and we should know that He, Exalted is He, will not leave us to our devices.
- ☐ Even if all the external forces and factors came together to attain something, Allah's Will shall always prevail.
- ☐ The Islamic doctrine commands us to be humble and feel our greatness through the lens of our servitude to Allah, Exalted is He.

28

Worship

“And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give zakah. And that is the correct religion.” Al-Bayyinah 98:5

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Acts of Worship: How They Purify the Soul and Strengthen Servitude to Allah

Acts of worship are not merely formal rituals. Rather, they are an educational and spiritual system designed by Allah to strengthen servitude in the human heart and purify the self. They aim to build values and guide the person practically toward closeness to Allah and inner peace.

Section One: The Transformative Power of Worship

They are not merely formal rituals.

Rather, they are an integrated educational system for purifying the soul and building values.



The essence is piety, not appearance

Allah looks at the presence of the heart and the inner response. The value of worship lies in how much it changes the soul.

Worship affects a person in two main ways

Deepening the sense of servitude to Allah.



Building values in the conscience through repetition.

Section Two: Your Practical Path to Servitude

The basic level: the obligatory minimum

The five daily prayers and obligatory remembrances are sufficient to achieve inner peace, provided they are performed with awareness.



The aspirational level: recommended increase

Voluntary prayers and night prayer are for those who have strong determination. Take from them according to your ability.



The golden rule: gentleness with yourself

Feel the presence of Allah gently. The feeling is natural; simply proceed calmly and do not despair.



Final Message

Worship is not a burden; it is a divine gift.

Whoever performs it with awareness will have their heart purified, their soul settled, and their journey to Allah strengthened.



The details of these acts of worship are mentioned in the books of Muslim scholars, which are published in bookstores around the world. In general, terms, there is consensus among them, although they differ in the details of how some acts should be performed. This scope for difference is an example of the open door of *ijtihad*, or the practice for interpretation in Islamic thought.

All Muslims agree on the number of compulsory daily prayers, whether a person is away from home or not. They also agree on the “supplications” recited during the prayers. Similarly, they agree on fasting during the month of Ramadhan and what things invalidate it, when charity (*zakaat*) must be collected and where it should be spent, Hajj

and Umrah and their main rituals, the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice and jihad. They only differ with regard to certain details. These sorts of differences exist between all Islamic sects, such as the addition of the phrase “The prayer is better than sleeping” in the *azaan* and whether to extend or fold the hands during prayers.

The acts of worship include prayer, reading the Quran, reciting *dua’a* (supplications), pilgrimage, fasting, charity, and other devotional acts. The acts of worship are one of the most prominent subjects in Islamic Sharia, and Islam puts a strong emphasis on their importance for Muslims: “I did not create the jinn and the humans except that they may worship Me.” (Quran 51:56)

Indeed, worship effectively elevates human beings and pushes them towards the four themes discussed earlier. It does so by doing the following:

First, it deepens our sense of worship to Allah in our souls, so that our souls become purer, stronger, more beautiful, less affected by the desires and power of anger, and more desiring of divine values and attributes (the second step to achieving nearness to Allah the Almighty). This is expressed in the verse: “... and establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing,” (Quran 29:45)

Secondly, worship, which consists of prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, reciting the Quran, supplications and other acts, takes up most of our time throughout each year and from day to day. During this worship, we participate in various activities—audio, visual, physical, spiritual, and mental—that evoke emotions including love, fear, hope, servitude to God, compassion, solidarity with the faithful, self-denial and the desire to be benevolent.

These practices include all the values and attributes of God and Islamic concepts. As such, when we interact with these acts of worship, our practices should instill these values and concepts into our conscience and into every facet of us and become part of our psychological construction (the first element of the equation of proximity to God Almighty).

Of course, this depends on how we interact with these acts of worship, and our sincerity in performing them.

The Quran emphasizes the importance of this sincerity; for example, when talking about the issue of sacrifice in the pilgrimage. The Almighty says: “It is not their meat nor their blood, that reaches Allah: it is your piety that reaches Him.” (Quran 22:37)

Consolidating the notion of slavery to God in our conscience

So, we come back to the question we addressed in the last lesson: How do we establish these divine values in ourselves from a practical perspective?

We do not need to innovate solutions, since Allah did not neglect us in this regard. *“Does man think that he will be left neglected?”* (75:36). He legislated and set forth solutions to ensure that we achieve success and tranquility; all we need to do is pay attention.

Generally, solutions exist at two levels. More accurately, we can say there are two sets of practices designated by Allah for us:

1. The setting of mandatory practices (wajibat):

This is made up of the rituals of worship and the mandatory recitals, including the five daily prayers. This is more than enough to make a

person happy and tranquil in life, but it must be practiced with a special state of awareness, cognition, and meditation.

We are not required to pray with the same level of submission as the saints, nor are we required to understand the meaning of everything we say in our prayers. However, when we pray, we must sense, at least a little, that we are before Allah and that He has called us to Him. Then, we must remember all the divine values related to His mercy and majesty.

We must try to hover in the realm of our love of Allah. We must remember that His love is rooted in our intuition and it is He who caused this to be the case. We must not be shy; rather, we must allow this beautiful love to show up in our conscious mind and savor it.

We must talk to Allah from the depths of our hearts and say what we want. We must describe what we need, for He can hear and see us and is with us, and He will never forget us, even if we are oblivious to Him. At the same time, we must not be tough on ourselves or coerce ourselves to do this. We must take

things easy and walk in baby steps, or our Selves may rebel.

Our minds may wander astray towards the world of al-Dunya and its conflicts and pleasures. This is normal and expected and happens to most of us; therefore, do not be dissuaded. Satan works hard to use these feelings of guilt to distract us from the remembrance of Allah: [“Satan has overcome them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah”](#) (58:19). Therefore, if we become distracted, we should regain our composure and sense the greatness of Allah and His love and mercy.

While we are praying, we may find a few interesting thoughts come to mind about the problems we are facing. They may stay in our minds while we are praying and distract us from the prayer. At the end of the prayer, Satan will make us feel guilty and convince is that earthly life and al-Dunya are controlling us and that we have no real hope of getting closer to Allah.

Satan plays many dirty tricks on us, so be smarter than him and consider those interesting thoughts as inspiration from Allah. Be prostrate in gratitude (sujūd) to Allah, and that will send Satan skulking away.

We may start to think of all our errands, and that may make us want to pray faster so we can get on with our business; however, no matter how important the thing we are planning to do after the prayer is, we should not rush it. We must endeavor to leave the earthly life, al-Dunya and all its business at the doorstep of the room and remove it from our minds in the same way we remove our shoes: [“O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from remembrance of Allah. And whoever does that—then those are the losers”](#) (63:9).

We must give ourselves time to enjoy prayer, but not force ourselves to pray slowly; rather, simply allow ourselves the time we need to pray.

We must deal with every act of worship in the same manner, with contemplation and gentleness, so that its content, notions, and goals sink in. We must not forget that the One who legislated them, Allah, is the same One who created man and knows him and his interest's best. Consider how Allah tells us: "Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing" (29:45).

2. The setting of encouraged practices (mustahabât):

This set of practices comprises the optional acts of worship (mustahabât), including the night prayer (salat al-layl). Allah, our creator, knows that some of us are more readily prepared to achieve more, and it is for those that He legislated this set of acts. It is next to impossible to do everything in this group, but we can choose whatever suits our capabilities, circumstances, requirements, and level of perseverance.





Essay Activity (External)

Write a research paper (between 500 and 1000 words) about the mechanisms and methods that you think Muslim societies should follow to cement the values of cohabitation and tolerance between the different Islamic sects.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 28

Take ten minutes to match each of the Quranic verses with one of the following Islamic concepts, bearing in mind that some of the verses are not directly related to the concepts:

Islamic concepts:

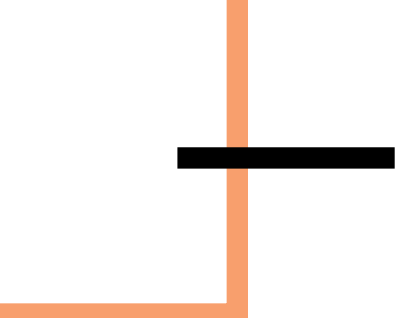
1. We must speak to God sincerely and not be afraid to tell Him what you want; He will hear us and be with us and will not overlook us, even if we are not mindful of Him.
2. God set out the acts of worship and rituals solely for us. He has no need for them; they are merely to enhance our state of piety and reverence and our sense of servitude to Him.
3. Being complacent in prayer, making light of it and pursuing our earthly desires leads to us becoming allies of Satan.

4. Allah forbids man to perform prayer if he is distracted from this prayer by matters of the earthly world and its embellishments. He describes this as one of the signs of failure.
5. Acts of worship enhance the feeling of servitude to God within our souls. This makes our souls purer, stronger and more beautiful, less affected by lust and forces of anger, and more desiring of divine values and attributes.
6. The devil does his best to whisper to man and distract him from the remembrance of Allah.

Quranic verses:

- ☐ “O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship.” (Quran 2: 172)

- "It is You we worship and You we ask for help." (Quran 1: 5)
- "But there came after them successors who neglected prayer and pursued desires; so they are going to meet evil" (Quran 19:59)
- "Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good." (Quran 22:37)
- "...Indeed, Allah is my Lord and your Lord, so worship Him. That is the straight path."" (Quran 3:51)
- "And when My servants ask you, [O Muhammad], concerning Me - indeed I am near. I respond to the invocation of the supplicant when he calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me [by obedience] and believe in Me that they may be [rightly] guided." (Quran 2:186)
- "Satan has overcome them and made them forget the remembrance of Allah. Those are the party of Satan. Unquestionably, the party of Satan - they will be the losers." (Quran 58:19)
- "Say, [O Muhammad], "O people, if you are in doubt as to my religion - then I do not worship those which you worship besides Allah; but I worship Allah, who causes your death. And I have been commanded to be of the believers." (Quran 10:104)
- "O you who have believed, let not your wealth and your children divert you from remembrance of Allah. And whoever does that - then those are the losers." (Quran 63:9)
- "Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do." (Quran 29 : 45)
- "Say, "Indeed, I have been forbidden to worship those you invoke besides Allah ." Say, "I will not follow your desires, for I would then have gone astray, and I would not be of the [rightly] guided."" (Quran 6:56)
- "Say, "Do you worship besides Allah that which holds for you no [power of] harm or benefit while it is Allah who is the Hearing, the Knowing?"" (Quran 5:76)



“If We had sent down this Qur’an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and coming apart from fear of Allah. And these examples We present to the people that perhaps they will give thought.” Al-Hashr 59:21

29

Reading the Holy Quran

Reading the Holy Quran: The Truest Path to Guidance, Healing, and Tranquility

Section 2: The Way Back to the Quran



The Problem: Reading without contemplation

Practical distance from the Quran leads to searching for tranquility in the wrong places.

Start Practically: The Continuous Small Amount

One verse with contemplation in a quiet time is enough to begin the change.



Closing Message

"The Quran is not a book we read in our spare time, but a life companion; and whoever seeks guidance in anything else... Allah will lead them astray".

Effective Etiquettes: Interaction and Belief

Read with attention and humility, and interact with the verses as if they are addressing you personally.

Section 1: The Power of the Quran and its Deep Impact



Source of Guidance and Insight

It is a preserved divine revelation, containing an explanation of all things, and guidance and mercy for the believers.



Builds the Soul and Brings You Closer to Allah

It reshapes the psychological and value structure and instills concepts of tranquility and certainty.



Healing for the Bosoms in Times of Turmoil

It is the true medicine for psychological crises filled with anxiety, pressure, and changes.

The Quran is a source of law from which Muslims draw the teachings of their faith and their doctrine: “And this [Qur'an] is a Book We have revealed [which is] blessed, so follow it and fear Allah that you may receive mercy” (Quran 6:155).

The Holy Quran is the divine revelation that came down from Allah to the Great Prophet, Mohammed (PBUHF), and it elucidates everything and brings guidance and mercy to the believers: “And We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims.” (Quran 16:89)

It is a timeless miracle which humans have been unable to match. It is not open to change, modification or restoration. That which is in our hands is the same as the Quran that descended upon the Prophet (PBUHF): “Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian.” (Quran 15:9)

Persistence in reading the Quran imbues humans with the concepts and culture of the Quran, thus encouraging us to develop the corresponding psychological constitution (the first element in the equation of gaining closer proximity to God). Moreover, our commitment to reading the Quran and obeying the Almighty's orders consolidates and deepens our understanding of our God and our servitude to Him (the second element in the equation of gaining closer proximity to God): “And We had certainly brought them a Book which We detailed by knowledge—as guidance and mercy to a people who believe” (Quran 7:52);

In this age, with the world in turmoil, the rapid pace of life, and the growing challenges, difficulties, and changes that shake people's lives, humanity has become in desperate need of what can ease the hardships of this world and guide them on how to strive for success, tranquility, and strength. Almighty God revealed the Qur'an as guidance and direction for people — for their well-being and happiness in this life and the hereafter, as a healing for what lies within their hearts, and as a means of purification and spiritual refinement for their souls.

“And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss” (Quran 17:82).

Imam Ali (AS) said: “And know that this Quran is the advisor that never cheats you, the guide that never misguides you... So look for cures for your ailments there... and use it to find your Lord, seek advice for yourself, and verify your opinions with what the Quran says.”

However, our current culture has separated us from the Quran, and we now read it — whenever we read it — without contemplation or affirmation of the truths, it contains. . At the same time, self-help books that are based on non-Islamic ideas have become very popular, aiming to help people attain happiness and success.

Unfortunately, we even notice that many Muslims seek out these self-help books, because of the force of global marketing. Many Muslims seek the solutions to our problems and issues in the books and lectures of people who do not believe in Allah and

ignore what life really is. Many of us learn how to improve ourselves and manage our issues through the writings of these non-Muslim authors, and we follow them without any real dialogue or contemplation regarding their texts. Some of us even promote this content in our societies and to our children and families, and they have been captivated by their ideas, despite the extreme discordance with the divine path. As such, our families and societies have slowly become Muslim on the outside while adopting a Western culture.

Some of these ideas might be able to achieve their goals, in a limited fashion, but the damages and harm they cause are much greater than the benefits they might bring. The Holy Quran is the only gate that can really guide humans and teach them how to obtain happiness in its truest and most complete manner. As such, we should beware and warn those who surround us that we should build our convictions regarding how to improve ourselves and how to attain happiness and success, both as individuals and as a society, on Quranic truths, or at the very least, on truths that coincide with Quranic truths.

“Who then is more worthy to be followed: the One Who guides to the truth or those who cannot find the way unless guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?” (Surat Yunus, 35)

Allah, Exalted is He, also says in the Quran: “We send down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss.” (Surat Al-Israa, 82)

The Qur’an, with its divine concepts and practices, is a powerful remedy for all social, moral, and psychological ailments—if it is properly understood and followed. Moreover, it is a mercy for the believers, granting them purity and spiritual refinement, elevating them to the highest levels of happiness and success. Building the human being upon divine principles and beliefs brings inner peace, contentment, strength, and passion, while building society on these same foundations grants it stability and growth.

Not only is everything in the Qur’an true and right, but within it lie all the truths humanity—both individuals and communities—needs to

attain peace, stability, happiness, and success. The role of the Noble Messenger (peace be upon him) was to clarify these truths to people, to bring them glad tidings of happiness in this world and the hereafter if they followed his guidance, and to warn them of misery if they did not.

“And We sent it down with the truth, and in truth it descended. And We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner.” (Al-Isra 17:105)

Therefore, make sure to keep the Qur’an as your constant companion wherever you are. Set aside a few minutes each day to read whatever portion you can — even from your mobile phone — whether one or two verses, with reflection and contemplation. Let it inspire you in your daily life, provide you with knowledge, and guide your actions. Seek healing for your troubles through it, and use its guidance to face life’s challenges. Remember the saying of the Prophet (peace be upon him): “Whoever seeks guidance from anything other than it, Allah will misguide him.”



Read whatever you can from the Holy Qur'an—even two or three verses—at whatever time suits you during the day. But make sure it's a time when your mind is least preoccupied with worldly matters, such as after the dawn prayer.

If you find it difficult to do so, make it a habit to turn on the Qur'an radio channel while driving to work, and listen to the verses of the Holy Qur'an for just a few minutes.

One of the problems we face is that we have become accustomed to reading or listening

to the Qur'an while our minds wander elsewhere. Break this habit with a simple act of will—by focusing fully on the Qur'an, even for just a few minutes a day.

Read or listen to the Qur'an with full attention, reflection, and belief. If you can, engage with it emotionally. Let the meanings of the Qur'anic verses you hear or read enter your consciousness—and from there, gently and gradually, seep into your subconscious mind—as if you were a humble student learning from a great teacher, or a small child listening to his father. Do not be arrogant.

If you come across a verse that conveys a clear meaning which you do not find reflected in your life, believe the Qur'an and question yourself—for God speaks nothing but the truth. For example, when Allah says: **“Call upon Me; I will respond to you.”** (Ghafir 40:60)

Do not overanalyze or rationalize—have absolute trust that when you call upon Allah, He will indeed respond, even if appearances suggest otherwise.

It is like when your child sees a mirage and mistakes it for water, but you, knowing the truth, ask him to trust your word and disbelieve his eyes, because what he sees is only an illusion. You, being human, can err—but God never errs and never speaks anything but the truth. That is why it is not without purpose that God prescribed the phrase “Sadaq Allah al-‘Azim” (Allah the Almighty has spoken the truth) to be said after reciting the Qur'an.

I suggest that we make it a habit to read the Qur'an on our phones whenever we have a spare moment—while waiting in a reception room, for example, or when the traffic light turns red, and so on. I also recommend downloading the app Mukhtasar Tafsir al-Mizan (Abridged Interpretation of Al-Mizan), or another trusted commentary app, so that we can easily look up the meanings of verses that spark our curiosity while reading the Qur'an.



Optional Reading

What Have Non-Muslims Said About the Quran

Dr. Keith Moore,
Canadian, is professor
emeritus in the Faculty of
Surgery at the University
of Toronto and author of
“Embryology in the Koran
and the Hadith.



The Quran says: “And indeed, We created humankind from an extract of clay, then placed each “human” as a sperm-drop in a secure place, then We developed the drop into a clinging clot “of blood”, then developed the clot into a lump “of flesh”, then developed the lump into bones, then clothed the bones with flesh, then We brought it into being as a new creation. So Blessed is Allah, the Best of Creators.” (Surat Al-Muminun, 12-14). “At first, I was amazed by

the accuracy of the statements that were recorded in the 7th century AD. [...] It is clear to me that these statements must have come to Muhammad from God, or Allah, because most of this knowledge was not discovered until many centuries later. This proves to me that Muhammad must have been a messenger of God, or Allah.

**Dr. Maurice Bucaille, French
physician, scientist,
researcher and writer,
author of “The Qur’an and
Science”**



“I presented the study based on the existence of certain statements concerning physiology and reproduction in the Qur’an. My reason for presenting this lecture was that it is impossible to explain how a text produced in the seventh century could have contained ideas that have only been discovered in modern times. It makes

us deem it quite unthinkable for a man of Muhammad's time to have been the author of such statements, because of the state of knowledge in his day. Such considerations are part of what gives the Qur'anic revelation its unique place among religious and non-religious texts and force the impartial scientist to admit his inability to provide an explanation based solely upon materialistic reasoning.

Such facts as I have had the pleasure of exposing to you here appear to represent a genuine challenge to human explanation, leaving only one alternative: the Qur'an is undoubtedly a revelation from God.

Dr. T.V.N. Persaud,
Canadian writer and
Professor of Anatomy at
the University of
Manitoba, Canada, in the
documentary "It is Truth."



"The way it was explained to me is that Muhammad was a very ordinary man. He could not read, did not know [how] to write. In fact, he was illiterate. And we're talking about twelve

[actually fourteen] centuries ago. You have someone illiterate making profound pronouncements and statements that are amazingly accurate about scientific nature. "And I personally can't see how this could be a mere chance."

Professor Tejatat Tejasen,
former Dean of the
faculty of Medicine,
University of Chiang Mai,
Chiang Mai, Thailand, at
the Eight Saudi Arabian
Medical Conference.



"In the last three years, I became interested in the Qur'an... From my studies and what I have learned throughout this conference, I believe that everything that has been recorded in the Qur'an fourteen hundred years ago must be the truth, which can be proved by scientific means. Since the Prophet Muhammad, could neither read nor write, Muhammad have been an messenger who relayed this truth, which was revealed to him as an enlightenment by the one who is an eligible creator. This creator must be God or Allah. I think this is the time to

say, La ilaha illa Allah, "there is no god to worship except Allah (God)", Muhammad rasoolu Allah, "Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah". "The most valuable thing I have gained from attending this conference is La ilaha illa Allah and becoming a Muslim."

Dr. E. Marshall Johnson,
American Professor of
Anatomy and
Developmental Biology,
Thomas Jefferson
University, USA, from the
documentary "It is Truth."



"The Qur'an describes not only the development of external form but also emphasizes the internal stages, the stages inside the embryo, of its creation and development, emphasizing major events recognized by contemporary science." As a scientist, I can only deal with things that I can specifically see. I can understand embryology and developmental biology. I can understand the words that are translated to me from the Qur'an. As I gave the example before, if I were to transpose myself into that era, knowing



what I do today and describing things, I could not describe the things that were described... I see no evidence to refute the idea that this individual, Muhammad, had to have gotten this information somewhere. So I see nothing here in conflict with the concept that divine intervention was involved in what he was able to write..."

Source

(Mercy To The World: Muhammed (PBUHF), Br. Asifuddin Muhammed, 2012, Published by: Islamic Academy For Comparative Religion) <https://archive.org/details/ProphetMUHAMMMPeaceBe-UponHim/page/n3?q=history+of+Islam+may+be+entirely+derived>



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 29

Take five minutes to match each of the Quranic verses with one of the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses :

1. "And this [Qur'an] is a Book We have revealed [which is] blessed, so follow it and fear Allah that you may receive mercy" (Surat Al-Anaam, 155)
2. "Who then is more worthy to be followed: the One Who guides to the truth or those who cannot find the way unless guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?" (Surat Yunus, 35)
3. "And We had certainly brought them a Book which We detailed by knowledge—as guidance and mercy to a people who believe" (Surat Al-'Araf, 52)
4. "We have sent down the Quran in truth, and with the truth it has come down. We have sent you 'O Prophet' only as a deliverer of good news and a warner." (Surat Al-Israa, 105)
5. "We send down the Quran as a healing and mercy for the believers, but it only increases the wrongdoers in loss." (Surat Al-Israa, 82)
6. "It is certainly We Who have revealed the Reminder, and it is certainly We Who will preserve it." (Surat Al-Hijr, 9)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ The Quran we have with us in the current age is the same Quran that was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).
- ☐ The Quran, with all the concepts it contains and the divine practices, has a successful cure to all social, behavioral and psychological ailments, if it is properly understood and followed.
- ☐ The Holy Quran is one of the two sources of Islamic Sharia, from which we derive our religion and its laws.
- ☐ The continuous reading of the Quran by a person allows them to deepen their understanding of the Quran's concepts and ideas and it supports the person in developing a stronger personality and becoming wiser.
- ☐ Not only is everything in the Quran true and correct, it contains all the truths that humanity needs, both at an individual and societal level, to attain calmness, stability, happiness and success. The role of the Greatest Messenger (PBUH) is to bring these truths to everyone.
- ☐ We should beware and warn those who surround us that we should build our convictions regarding how to improve ourselves and how to attain happiness and success, both as an individual and a society, on Quranic truths, or at the very least, on truths that coincide with Quranic truths.

30

Remembrance of Allah, Exalted is He

“O you who have believed, remember Allah
with much remembrance And exalt Him
morning and afternoon.” Al-Ahzab 33:41–42



Remembering Allah often: Tranquility amidst the noise of life

The Problem
(Life's noise consumes the soul)



Constant busyness weakens heartfelt presence

Even acts of worship might be performed in total absent-mindedness.

Result: A circle of anxiety and stress

This leads to stress, anxiety, and psychological and social ailments.



Two common mistakes:
Total withdrawal or complete heedlessness

The right path is to remember Allah while living life, not outside of it.

The Solution
(Mindful remembrance in the midst of life)



True remembrance is a living awareness of Allah's presence

It is not just repeating words, but a living sense of His attributes.

Remembering Allah

Allah

Allah

Invest in the small gaps in your day

Utilize times of walking, driving, or waiting between tasks.

Closing Message



Remember Allah... while you work, while you strive, and while you struggle.

For whoever lives with Allah, lives in peace... no matter how turbulent the world becomes.

The challenges and obstacles of life make no distinction between believers and non-believers. They take a toll on each person and consume their mood, energy, and time. They can distance a person from Allah and their memory of Allah. They may even occupy a person's mind while they are praying and compete with their worship; they may not even pay attention to the prayer until they have finished it and thus do so when chanting the supplications.

Some of us manage, with the help of Allah, to use his will to mitigate the burdens of earthly life, al-Dunya and to dedicate our time to worshipping Allah. Unfortunately, in this case, there is a danger that we reach a state in which we avoid social and humanitarian activities.

The great majority of us find ourselves caught up in the unrelenting struggle of life, not because of greed for its pleasures but because of our need to make a dignified living. As a result, we scarcely find time for ourselves and for our families, let alone for Allah. If we pray, we do it as part of fulfilling a duty, and we might be absent-minded during the prayer.

If we try—in a moment of wakefulness and determination—to remove ourselves from this confusion and daily grind, we find ourselves tethered by social conventions and requirements that we helped to shape. Worse than this, we find ourselves captive to our own illusions and misconceptions.

The price we pay for engaging in life is exorbitant, and we pay it in the form of psychological stress, tension, irritability, anxiety, depression, and a myriad of other ailments, many of which manifest themselves in the form of bodily pains and illnesses. Others manifest themselves in social abnormalities, familial disharmony, and more.

So, what is the solution? How do we get rid of these various psychological stressors and diseases? How do we remain in touch with our servitude and connection to Allah in every waking moment?

In fact, the solution to both issues is the same. It lies in becoming accustomed to becoming even more connected to Allah, remembering Him, and sensing our servitude to Him as we live amongst others and pass through every challenge and joy that life holds. We interact with life, push its boundaries, are pushed by it, and engage in its struggles, all while simultaneously managing to innovate and excel. Throughout all of this, we remain quiet, serene, and comfortable. We feel undaunted by what is happening around us. All we see is

God and our servitude to Him. This serenity does not stop us from engaging with life; on the contrary, it immerses us in positivity. “Those who have believed and whose hearts are assured by the remembrance of Allah. Unquestionably, by the remembrance of Allah hearts are assured” (13:28).

This seems like a nice notion, but for too many of us, it is more like a vague prescription for medications. It is not useful because we do not know how to apply it.

How, practically, can we live and engage with the painful and wearisome concerns and struggles of life—with all its conspiracies and intrigues—while at the same time maintaining a state of bondage to Allah and feeling serene, tranquil, and even unparalleled bliss?



The answer is that when we utter the phrase “remembrance of Allah,” we are not referring to the literal word “Allah,” but the remembrance of Allah the Exalted—of everything that one can fathom of the unity of Allah, to the extent that we can comprehend it.

Remember and sense that Allah is your God, your owner, the owner of every particle in this universe, and that everything is under his grip; nothing is occult to Him, and if He wants anything, He needs only to say it and it will be so.

Remember and feel that you are nothing more than his servant and creature that He, exalted, loves. Remember that He is more merciful to you than your own mother is and that whatever happens to you, He knows about it and it is in your interest.

Remember that you are in a state of perpetual, direct, and uninterrupted contact with Him. It is only you who are oblivious to this contact. You can talk to Allah and say what you want, when and how you want; you can tell Him all your secrets and whispers, and He will hear you and place the whole universe at your service.

Our remembrance of, perception of, and faith in these facts—even if they lack a specific linguistic framework—allows them to gradually permeate our depths and rid us of our delusions, misconceptions, and existing mental maps. The more these principles and divine values take root within us, the more composed and serene we will feel, no matter what is happening around us.

As you face many challenges in your busy life and face downfalls, successes, and surprises, and as different emotions take hold of you, you really need someone to talk to about everything, including your secrets. But it is usually the hardest time to find someone to listen to you, and if you find someone who does listen to you, it's even harder to find someone to help you.

That is why I will make use of this opportunity to mention that it is a good habit to talk to Allah and supplicate when talking with Him about all your worries, happiness, or sadness. Seek refuge in Allah, Exalted is He, whenever you get the chance to do so. [“Praise Allah as you used to praise your forefathers before](#)

[Islam, or even more passionately.”](#) (Surat Al-Baqarah, 200)

And even if your schedule is full, there is a lot of free time in your busy schedule – such as when you walk from your office to the meeting room, or when you drive from your place of work to your house, or when you are in the reception hall to meet your manager or a client, etc. [“Once the prayer is over, disperse throughout the land and seek the bounty of Allah. And remember Allah often so you may be successful.”](#) (Surat Al-Jumuah, 10).

Do not waste those moments, but rather call upon Allah, you are always in need of Him to tell Him about your fears and emotions and to ask Him for help, and because your schedule is full and challenging, you have a lot to request from Allah, Exalted is He, and to talk to Him about. [“When My servants ask you ‘O Prophet’ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one’s prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ‘with obedience’ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ‘to the Right Way’.”](#) (Surat Al-Baqarah, 186).

Perhaps you will feel strange at first because we are not used to talking to Allah, Exalted is He, except through the supplications we know. However, you'll get used to it in no time at all, and then it will become part of who you are and you'll start enjoying it.

This is going to grant you calmness and strength, for you will be more connected to Allah, the Creator of everything. As time passes, you will start relying on Him even more and entrusting all your affairs to Him and you will find joy in your supplications to Him. As such, the divine principles and values will become enshrined in your existence, as will the love of Allah, Exalted is He. *"Those who believe and whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of Allah. Surely in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find comfort?"* (Surat ar-Raad, 28)

Surpassing the evident reality in front of you and being in close proximity to Allah, Exalted is He, creates a level of elevation in a Muslim's personality, and this is one of the best traits and characteristics of a Muslim. A person who

lives the sweetness of remembering Allah and feels joy when they sense Allah, Exalted is He, disregards the minor issues in life that cause people to compete and fight.

This presentiment surpassing of minor issues and this elevation in one's feelings create a higher level of calmness, stability, and humility in a Muslim's personality.

And because life in this world is similar to a stormy sea, which becomes more intense as you become stronger and calmer, a person who believes in Allah's path for them in this world gets exposed to many types of unpleasant things and loneliness. This may cause psychological distress, preventing a person from doing what they should and having enough willpower to deal with it. This distress might lead to despair, negativity, and a feeling of weakness, but remembering Allah, Exalted is He, and feeling His Presence will fix this issue, provide the soul with positivity and relaxation, and give it more energy to do what it should, leading to actions that serve Allah and His Path. This is what the Quran and the

Prophet (PBUH) mention for moments of distress. Read these holy verses and notice how they improve your state by remembering Allah, Exalted is He, and feeling His Presence. "So be patient  O Prophet  with what they say. And glorify the praises of your Lord before sunrise and before sunset, and glorify Him in the hours of the night and at both ends of the day, 1 so that you may be pleased  with the reward ." (Surat Taha, 130)³⁴

³⁴ Adapted from Martyr Shaykh Husayn Ma'n, Reflections on Spiritual Preparation.



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 30

Take ten minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts. Please note that some of the verses cited are not relevant to the concepts mentioned:

Islamic concepts:

1. Islam always commands us to sense our smallness when thinking of ourselves as individuals and to sense our greatness when thinking of ourselves as servants of Allah.
2. A human's pursuit of the material life - with all that is in it - takes him or her away from the remembrance of Allah and worship of Him. This is a catastrophic and dangerous thing.
3. One of the most important things mentioned by God in relation to Prophet Muhammad (PBUHF) was his description as a servant.
4. Allah mentioned five qualities of believers, the first being that they feel the fear of him in their hearts.
5. Remembrance of "God" does not refer merely to remembering the word "God" itself, but God himself in all His majesty: His oneness, our contemplation of this oneness, our bondage to Him and everything this entails.
6. The preoccupation of man with the concerns, joys and problems of life, which takes him away from the remembrance of God and his connection to Him, causes a great deal of human tension, psychological pressure, anxiety, depression and many of the psychological diseases we suffer from.
7. We, in ourselves, are nothing but poverty and nothingness; we derive our greatness and our moral fiber from our relationship to God, from being His servants and creatures, and from the fact that God (who is abundant and present) is our Lord.

8. God's intention for our life in the earthly world (al-Dunya) is that we combine our earthly pleasures and material wants with constant remembrance of God, bondage to God and a sense of worship for God. We should do this as we live among people and among all of life's facets, contradictions and challenges.
9. The devil's sense of greatness in himself is in direct proportion to the level of decay and misery he forces man to reach.

Quranic verses:

- ☐ "[Are] men whom neither commerce nor sale distracts from the remembrance of Allah and performance of prayer and giving of zakah. They fear a Day in which the hearts and eyes will [fearfully] turnabout –"(Quran 24:37)
- ☐ "...and Allah is the Free of need, while you are the needy. And if you turn away, He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you." (Quran 47:38)
- ☐ "And when you have completed your rites, remember Allah like your [previous] remembrance of your fathers or with [much] greater remembrance. And among the people is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share. But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire." Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account." (Quran 2: 201-203)
- ☐ "Indeed, those who fear Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember [Him] and at once they have insight." (Quran 7:201)
- ☐ "[Allah] said, "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" [Satan] said, "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay."" (Quran 7:12)
- ☐ "Never would the Messiah disdain to be a servant of Allah , nor would the angels near [to Him]. And whoever disdains His worship and is arrogant - He will gather them to Himself all together." (Quran 4:172)
- ☐ "And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayer and zakah as long as I remain alive." (Quran 19:31)

- "Competition in [worldly] increase diverts you, until you visit the graveyards." (Quran 102:2)
- "Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (Quran 3:191)
- "And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind."" (Quran 20:124)
- "And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed." (Quran 62:10)
- "O you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship." (Quran :172)
- "Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from al-Masjid al-Haram to al-Masjid al- Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Seeing." (Quran 17:1)
- "O mankind, you are those in need of Allah, while Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy. If He wills, He can do away with you and bring forth a new creation. And that is for Allah not difficult." (Quran 35:17)
- "The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts become fearful, and when His verses are recited to them, it increases them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely - the ones who establish prayer, and from what We have provided them, they spend." (Quran 8:2-3)

31

Duaa (Supplication)

“Rather, ask Allah for His bounties. Surely Allah has ‘perfect’ knowledge of all things.” (Surat An-Nisaa, 32)

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Life often gets hard, and sometimes it seems like we are in a little fishing boat in the middle of a massive storm. We have little power to control our lives and keep harmful things away from us. We can barely benefit from the abilities Allah, Exalted be He, has bestowed upon us.

Add to that the fact that humans are inherently impatient and have limited knowledge. Often times, a person seeks evil and harm for themselves, thinking that it is a great thing, and that is why we see people seeking harm very actively and praying to Allah from the depths of their hearts to attain it. "And human's 'swiftly' pray for evil as they pray for good. For humankind is ever hasty." (Surat Al-Israa, 11), and if Allah grants them what they seek, it would be catastrophic for them. "Perhaps you dislike something which is good for you and like something which is bad for you. Allah knows and you do not know." (Surat Al-Baqarah, 216)

Despite this, our purpose in this life, for which we were created by Allah, is not to calm down and have a safe and happy life, but rather to

seek perfection and to elevate those who surround us and the world as a whole, if possible, towards Allah, Exalted is He and to advance on His path. The path to Him, Exalted is He, is clear, but the details of our lives frequently cause us to be unsure of the correct course of action and behaviors that will allow us to progress on the path to Allah.

As such, Allah would never give us this heavy load as a responsibility that the heavens and the earth were not able to carry and leave us to our own devices. Instead, He supports us and grants us His compassion to allow us to succeed with our responsibilities. [“Do people think they will be left without purpose?”](#) (Surat Al-Qiyamah, 36)

In the story of the Righteous Servant, Al-Khodr (AS) with the Prophet Moses (AS), he says, [“I did not do it all on my own.”](#) (Surat Al-Kahf, 82), it demonstrates that Allah's will and care for His servants, as well as His providing for their needs and keeping disasters at bay, are incredibly real, and they frequently occur without the need for miracles. Through this, Allah teaches us that divine intervention is a

natural part of what happens in nature and that it does not go against the natural laws that condition our lives and drive them forward. Allah's subtle interventions assist us on the path to attaining our real purpose and goals, in accordance with the laws that Allah, Exalted be He, has created for this world. [“Whoever desires this fleeting world ‘alone’, We hasten in it whatever We please to whoever We will; then We destine them for Hell, where they will burn, condemned and rejected. But whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it accordingly, and is a ‘true’ believer, it is they whose striving will be appreciated.”](#) (Surat Al-Israa, 18-19)

The importance of supplication becomes evident here, and it is very important for our success in this world and the next. Allah, Exalted is He, said: [“Say, ‘O Prophet,’ ‘You ‘all’ would not ‘even’ matter to my Lord were it not for your faith ‘in \[prayer to\] Him’.”](#) (Surat Al-Furqan, 77). The Holy Prophet (PBUH) said: [“Supplication is the weapon of the believer, and the column that supports the religion, and the light that illuminates the heavens and the earth.”](#) (Mizan Al-Hikma).

Supplication is not merely an outward utterance and request by a person towards their God; that can be said when a person is not present mentally or does not know what they want. Instead, it is a real and existential state that takes over a person and makes them direct their whole existence towards Allah, Exalted be He, to request what it is they want from Him, out of a complete faith that Allah is the only cause behind all other causes and the Being who can grant us what we need, and that all the evident ailments and natural causes are in His hands, Exalted and Praised be He, alone with no partner.

“Supplication is a natural expression of the psychological state and feeling that a human has. When they understand that there are two truths in their lives: Allah and humanity, then they understand the real link between these two: Allah’s Existence, who is the source of sufficiency, perfection, and giving in this world, and the existence of humanity, who is a recipient of poverty and needs that can only be satisfied by Allah’s continuous giving.”³⁵

35 Haider Karim Sukkar and Farhan Muhammad Hamza al-Baydani, “Supplication in Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya: A Psychological Reading,” January 29, 2019. <https://imamhussain.org/arabic/24040>

Sayyid Tabatabai says in Tafsir Al-Mizan: The reality of supplication and asking Allah is that which the heart holds and the tongue manifests into words, not the mere utterance of words that a person might not even believe in or say in all seriousness,” and that is why we see that Allah, Exalted is He, considered actions that had no words attached to them to be a type of request, where He said, Exalted is He: *“And He has granted you all that you asked Him. If you tried to count Allah’s blessings, you would never be able to number them. Indeed humankind is truly unfair, ‘totally’ ungrateful.”* (Surat Ibrahim, 34), because humans “ask” Allah for countless blessings without using words, but by merely existing in their needy state, which is an existential tongue of sorts.”

This is why Allah, Exalted is He, made supplication to Him a condition of believing in Him and entrusting our affairs to Him. He said, Exalted is He: *“Your Lord has proclaimed, ‘Call upon Me, I will respond to you. Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humbled.’”* (Surat Ghafir, 60), and He said: *“So call upon Allah with sincere devotion, even to the dismay of the disbelievers.”* (Surat

Ghafir, 14), and He said: “Call upon your Lord humbly and secretly. Surely He does not like the transgressors.” (Surat Al-Araaf, 55).

Allah, Exalted is He, also strongly reproached humanity for seeking out apparent causes, instead of Allah, for He said: “and ‘Do not invoke, instead of Allah, what can neither benefit nor harm you—for if you do, then you will certainly be one of the wrongdoers,’” (Surat Yunus, 106), and He said: “But those ‘false gods’ you call besides Him can neither help you nor even themselves.” (Surat Al-Araaf, 197)

That is why, as Sayyid Tabatabai said in his exegesis, Tafsir Al-Mizan, “it is not a negation of the natural causality between things that Allah, Exalted be He, has created, but instead, [it is an affirmation] that there is no external cause that exists without Allah, Exalted be He, and people implicitly feel that this is the case. They feel, in accordance with their nature, that their needs have a cause that never fails [when He decides to Do something], and they feel that the explicit and apparent causes do not always lead to the expected effect. People

believe that the origin, from which everything begins, and the pillar on which their needs are met are not the same thing.

By understanding this, we can fully comprehend Allah’s words: “Exalted is He: ‘When My servants ask you ‘O Prophet’ about Me: I am truly near. I respond to one’s prayer when they call upon Me. So let them respond ‘with obedience’ to Me and believe in Me, perhaps they will be guided ‘to the Right Way’.” (Surat Al-Baqarah, 186).

Sayyid Tabatabai said in his exegesis, Tafsir Al-Mizan, regarding this verse, “This is the best expression of the subject matter in the most elegant and beautiful style. The whole verse is based on the first person singular pronoun which shows the great importance which the speaker, i.e. Allah attaches to this subject. Then come the words My servants and not “people” or such other words, and this enhances its importance even more; the reply (then verily I am near) starts dramatically just after the question without any preamble like: “then say that I am near”; and the reply has been emphasized with “verily”; and the

nearness of the speaker is described with the adjective near and not with any verb like “I come near him”, thus it shows that He is already near and will always remain near; then it mentions answering the prayer with the verb the mudhari’ which combines both the present and the future tenses, and indicates that He answers at present and will continue to answer the prayers of the supplicant; then the answer (I answer the prayer of the supplicant) is conditioned with when he calls on Me, but in reality it is not a condition separate from the main clause, both are one and the same thing, and it serves to emphasize that the prayer of the supplicant is answered without any condition or stipulation (as we see also in the verse: call on Me, I will answer you (Surat Ghafir, 60)). These seven points show how much importance has been attached to the answering of prayers. In addition, this verse, short as it is as repeats the first person singular pronoun seven times; it is the only verse with this characteristic in the whole of the Qur’an.

"In the same way, the condition in which he calls on me demonstrates that the promise of

answering the prayer shall apply when the supplicant is a genuine supplicant; when he desires that thing according to his natural and deeply ingrained knowledge, and when his heart is truly in what his tongue is asking for." Tafsir Al-Mizan.

“Therefore, the natural prayer addressed to Allah shall always be answered. If a prayer is not answered, then it lacks both or one of the two things mentioned in the verse: the prayer of the supplicant when he calls on Me. It may happen in the following ways:



First: There may be no prayer at all; it may only be a misunderstanding of the supplicant. For example, a man prays for an impossible thing (but he does not know that it is impossible), or for a thing that, if he knew the fact, he would not have wanted at all.

Second: There is indeed a prayer, but it is not addressed exclusively to Allah. For example, a man beseeches Allah for his needs, but his heart is looking towards its apparent causes or to some imaginary beings whom he thinks have the power to fulfill his needs. In this case, his prayer is not addressed exclusively to Allah. In other words, he did not beseech Allah in any way, because Allah, Who answers prayers, is the only One who has no partner in His affairs. He is not the one who works in partnership with apparent causes and imaginary beings.

So these are the two groups of supplicants whose hearts were not sincere in their prayers even if their tongues were.” Tafsir Al-Mizan

In Imam Ali’s advice to his son Hussain (AS): “Then He has placed the keys of His treasures in your hands in the sense that He has shown you the way to ask Him. Therefore, wherever you wish, open the doors of His favor with prayer and let abundant rains of His mercy fall on you. A delay in the acceptance of prayer should not disappoint you because the grant of prayer is according to the measure of your intention. Acceptance (of prayer) is sometimes delayed in order to provide a greater reward to the asker and better gifts to the expectant. Sometimes you ask for a thing but it is not given to you, and a better thing is given to you later, or a thing is taken away from you for some greater good of yours, because sometimes you ask for a thing that will ruin your religion if it is given to you. Therefore, your request should be for things whose beauty should be lasting and whose burden should remain away from you. “As for wealth, it will not last for you, nor will you live for it.”

Nahj Al-Balaghah

A contemplation of Islamic supplications ³⁶

Those of us who contemplate the prayers and supplications that were uttered by the Prophets in the Holy Quran, and in the hadiths of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and his family (AS) can feel the importance of supplication, and its intellectual, spiritual, and psychological value in that. It slowly takes its place in a person's life to become a set of behaviors and values, both at an individual and societal level. Contemplating the supplications of the family of the Prophet (PBUH), which we are lucky to be able to read, allows us to understand that the Islamic doctrine adopted a specific attitude towards supplications and prayers, and they aid us on the path to great behavior, proper beliefs, and ideas.

By reading and analyzing what the family of the Prophet (PBUH) said in their supplications,

we can understand the following intellectual aspects and educational goals and ideas:

First: The supplications explain the Islamic creed and its concepts, to establish them in our minds – like the concept of entrusting our affairs to Allah, praising and, glorifying Him, describing Allah's traits and greatness, Exalted is He, and attempting to bring a Muslim towards Allah, with all the totality of their existence.

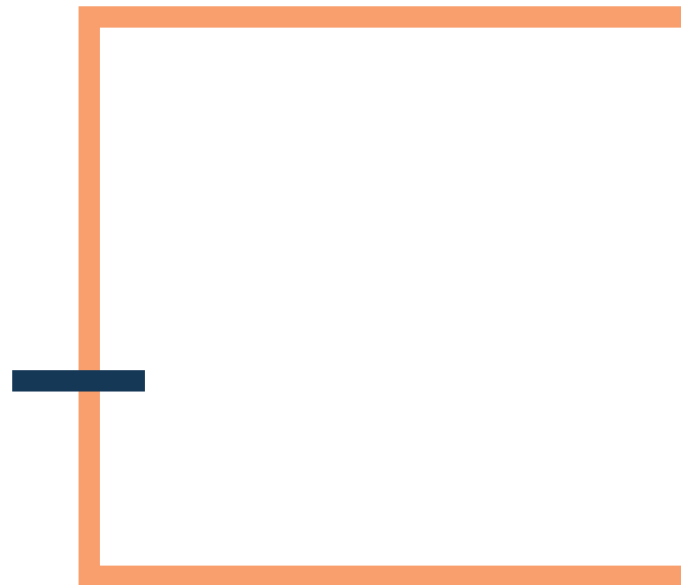
Second: Educating our conscience, increasing our sensibility to our mistakes, and recognizing our sins, in an environment where we can feel calm and able to remove the consequences of our sins, through repentance and devoutness to Allah, and requesting that He aid us in correcting our behaviors.

Third: Improving our behaviors and making them righteous, while also increasing the sensation of love and goodness in our souls. Through this, we notice the purity of the Islamic soul in a very clear manner, through the supplication of the family of the Prophet

³⁶ Haider Karim Sukkar and Farhan Muhammad Hamza al-Baydani, "Supplication in Al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya: A Psychological Reading," January 29, 2019.

(PBUH) that are easily found in the books of supplications that can be traced back to them. These supplications also demonstrate to us the depth of their understanding of Islam, for their supplications (AS) come from the depths of their souls and their understanding and they are a gift to us from the depths of their souls.

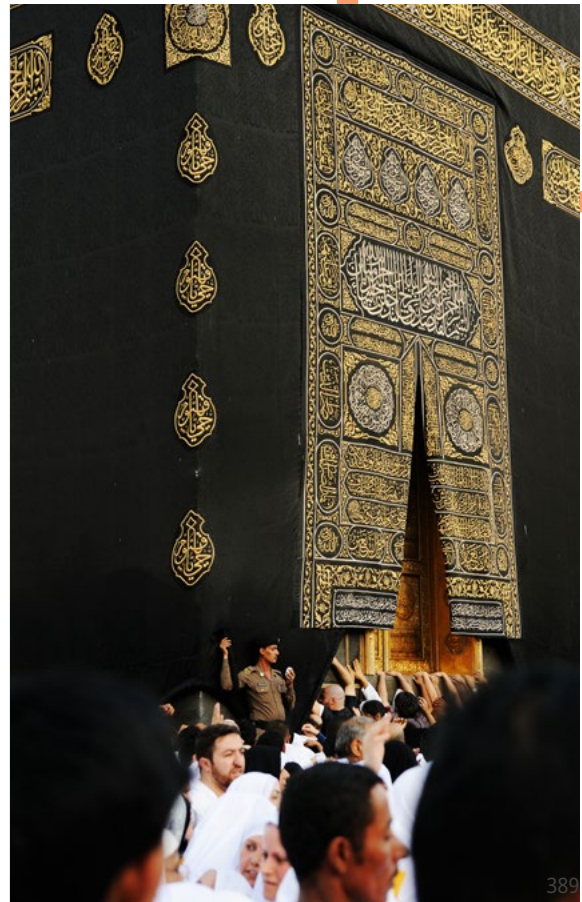
Their supplications (AS) are an intellectual and spiritual treasure that has remained in the hands of many Muslim generations, and it is a call to Muslims to construct their proper behaviors. These supplications also contain explanations of what faith is, in the truest and purest Quranic interpretation.





Essay Activity (Optional)

Read one of the fifteen Munajat of Imam Ali Zain al-Abideen (AS) while contemplating on the ideas contained within it, and then write a 250-500 word essay regarding the most important ideas that you noticed while reading it.





Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 31

Take five minutes to match the Quranic verses with the following Islamic concepts:

Quranic verses:

1. 'Do not invoke, instead of Allah, what can neither benefit nor harm you—for if you do, then you will certainly be one of the wrongdoers,'" (Surat Yunus, 106)
2. "Say, 'O Prophet, 'You 'all' would not 'even' matter to my Lord were it not for your faith 'in [prayer to] Him'.'" (Surat Al-Furqan, 77).
3. "And He has granted you all that you asked Him for. If you tried to count Allah's blessings, you would never be able to number them. Indeed humankind is truly unfair, 'totally' ungrateful." (Surat Ibrahim, 34)
4. "Whoever desires this fleeting world 'alone', We hasten in it whatever We please to whoever We will; then We destine them for Hell, where they will burn, condemned and rejected. But whoever desires the Hereafter and strives for it accordingly, and is a 'true' believer, it is they whose striving will be appreciated." (Surat Al-Israa, 18-19)
5. "And humans 'swiftly' pray for evil as they pray for good. For humankind is ever hasty." (Surat Al-Israa, 11)
6. "Do people think they will be left without purpose?" (Surat Al-Qiyamah, 36)
7. "Call upon Me, I will respond to you. Surely those who are too proud to worship Me will enter Hell, fully humbled." (Surat Ghafir, 60)

Islamic concepts:

- ☐ Allah would not have granted us this responsibility that the heavens and earth were not able to carry and then leave us to our own devices with no support and compassion from Him, Exalted is He, to aid us with this responsibility.
- ☐ The divine support and intervention is a natural part of life, in order to help us attain our real purpose, in accordance to the laws Allah, Exalted is He, placed for this world.
- ☐ Allah, Exalted is He, made prayers and supplications part of having faith in Him and entrusting our affairs to Him.
- ☐ Supplication is very important for our life, in this world and the afterlife.
- ☐ Humans are naturally impatient and lack the proper insight because of their limited knowledge, and they often seek out evil and harm for themselves, thinking that it is a great benefit.
- ☐ Allah, Exalted is He, strongly prohibited us from relying on the evident natural causes without relying on Him first.
- ☐ The reality of supplication is not what is uttered by the tongue, whether or not it is true, but rather, it is what is truly believed in the heart and soul.

32

Imam Mahdi

“And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants.” Al-Anbiya 21:105

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ALHIMMA ORO

▶ Watch The Video

Imam Mahdi

3:03

The video player interface features a background image of a person climbing a hill at sunset. A QR code with a central 'A' logo is overlaid on the left. A 'Watch The Video' button is in the top right, and the video title 'Imam Mahdi' and duration '3:03' are at the bottom.

The Awaited Mahdi (as): Human Hope and the Culture of Readiness

Section 1: The Promise: The Universal Revolution of Justice

Firm Belief in a Universal Reformer:

Muslims unanimously agree on the appearance of the Mahdi (as) from the Household of the Prophet (PBUH) at the end of time.

His Mission: A Civilizational Revolution, Not Just Political:

It aims to reform the human being before changing systems, and to build a world dominated by justice and proximity to Allah.



Section 2: The Methodology: From Faith to Action

The True Awaiter is the Active Reformer, Not the Spectator

His responsibility is calling to goodness, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong.

The Culture of Waiting: Readiness and Responsibility, Not Passive Anticipation

The success of the global revolution depends on humanity's moral and spiritual readiness.

The Impact: Creating a Human Being Greater than Themselves

Grants the individual a higher purpose and a sense of belonging to a global divine project.



Global Justice

Belief in the coming of al-Mahdi (AS)

Almost all Muslims agree on the predictions by the Holy Prophet (AS) regarding the appearance of a man from his family in the end times. This man goes by the title of Al Mahdi, and will fight falsehood and establish justice, prosperity and equality throughout the world.

On the website, Ad-durar As-sunniyah, it was mentioned that: "The Allamah Abu Attayib Muhammad Shamselhaqq Al-Adheem Abadi said: I know that the prominent opinion among all Muslims across history is that it is inevitable that a man from the Prophet's Progeny will appear at the end of time and he will support the religion, bring about justice and Muslims will follow him. He will rule the Islamic kingdoms, and his name is the Mahdi. The appearance of the Dajjal and the events that follow his appearance are necessary conditions for this to happen, in accordance to certain Hadiths. Also, Jesus, peace be upon him, will descend after him and kill the Dajjal or will

descend when the Mahdi appears and will help him kill the Dajjal. Also, Jesus will pray behind the Mahdi.

The Hadiths that deal with Al-Mahdi were reported by a group of Imams, including: Abu Dawud, At-Turmidhi, ibn Majah, Al-Bazar, Al-Hakem, At-Tabarani and Abu Ya'ali Al-Musali and they in turn reported it from a group of the Prophet's companions, such as: Ali, ibn Abbas, ibn Omar, Talha, Abdallah ibn Masoud, Abu Hurayra, Anas, Abu Saeed Al-Khudari, Umm Habibah, Umm Salamah, Thawban, Qurra ibn Ayyas, Ali Al-Hilali and Abdallah ibn Al-Hareth ibn Juzu'.

Al-Qadi Al-Shawkani said in Al-Fateh Ar-Rabbani: "What can be said for certain is that the Hadiths that mention the Awaited Mahdi are fifty hadiths and twenty-eight athar from the Companions or their followers". Then he listed them and commented on them and then he said: "and all of these have been reported from many sources with unambiguity and it is not concealed to those who review the sources."

And the Imam Abu Al-Hassan Muhammad ibn Al-Hussain Al-Abari said in the Book of Manaqeb Ash-Shafe'i: "The reports and the Hadiths from the Messenger of Allah (PBUHF) mentioned the Mahdi unambiguously, saying that he is from his progeny, he will rule for seven years and fill the world with justice. Jesus will descend with him and help him kill the Dajjal and the Mahdi will lead this nation and Jesus will pray behind him."

The culture of awaiting Imam Mahdi

Indeed, the revolution of Imam Mahdi does not just target systems of governance but is aimed at changing the prevalent human culture with a view to fulfilling the Islamic message. The purpose of this is to make the world a safe, positive, and constructive environment in which all creations are united by their desire for happiness in the form of closer proximity to God.

Thus, the success of the revolution is not merely dependent on the greatness of the leader but is also tied to the potential of humanity in its highest state of sophistication and perfection and its readiness to embrace the revolution.

The "Culture of Awaiting" is the direct responsibility of the Muslim nation and refers to making humanity developed and perfect enough to embrace the renaissance of Imam Mahdi. "And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (Quran 3:104). It is a culture wherein the Muslim nation feels a responsibility towards humanity as a whole to elevate it and bring it to a state of perfection in which it is ready to embrace Imam Mahdi's all-encompassing human and cultural revolution. "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (Quran 3:110).

Our reaction to the “Culture of Awaiting” has a strong influence on the splendor and beauty of life. Whenever we are inspired by a lofty goal, our spirit and mind transcend reality and we find ourselves in a majestic world where the latent forces in the depths of our hearts are used to achieve this goal.

Our personalities are formed by the nobleness of our goals. However, there is no greater goal or vision than being part of humanity as a whole, or indeed part of the whole system of creation, and striving towards advancement, perfection, beauty, and proximity to God, even being willing to sacrifice ourselves to achieve that goal.

Thus, Allah has established a culture of awaiting in all heavenly religions, especially in Islam. “And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants.” (Quran 21:105)

Sources:

The Dorar website, section 5, in using the words of science to prove the reality of the Mahdi, 8 Dec 2015 <http://www.dorar.net/enc/aqadia/2290>



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 32

Take ten minutes to match the following Quranic verses with the correct interpretation:

Quranic verses:

1. "It is He who has sent His Messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to manifest it over all religion, although they who associate others with Allah dislike it." (Quran 9:33)
2. "Said Moses to his people, "Seek help through Allah and be patient. Indeed, the earth belongs to Allah. He causes to inherit it whom He wills of His servants. And the [best] outcome is for the righteous."" (Quran 7:128)
3. "Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [to authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their

religion which He has preferred for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [for] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me." (Quran 24:55)

4. "And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants." (Quran 21:105)
5. "And We wanted to confer favor upon those who were oppressed in the land and make them leaders and make them inheritors" (Quran 28:5)

Interpretations of the verses:

- ☐ Succession on Earth means being granted authority over its benefits and the security of earthly blessings. As such, the verse indicates how the Earth will be cleansed of polytheism and sin and inhabited by a virtuous human society that worships God and do not associate anything with Him.

- When we talk about the inheritance of the earth and the way in which certain peoples are chosen over others, we are referring to the believers who are descended from the nations of the prophets. God cleansed these nations of unbelievers and immoral individuals and saved the believers, like the people of Noah, Hud, Saleh, and Shuaib. The believers who were saved cultivated virtuous societies.
- The case being referred to in this verse is the might of the Pharaoh and the way in which he used it to weaken the children of Israel with the aim of eradicating them completely. The verse is about the bestowing of grace on those who had been weakened - by making them imams for others to follow and making them the inheritors of land that had previously been in the hands of their oppressors. As such, they were able to create a place to settle and call their own after previously being restricted to where others wanted them to live.
- The verse indicates that God wanted to spread Islam among all humans.

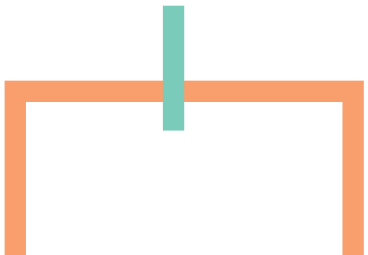


- This refers to an invitation from Moses (PBUH) to the children of Israel, urging them to seek help from God to abolish the Pharaoh's cruelty towards them and to exhibit fortitude in the face of his threats of torture. It was not the pharaoh's land to pass down to whomever he pleased, but rather God's. As such, Moses instructed the Israelis that if they sought refuge in Allah and were patient with Him in the face of their adversity, they would inherit the land they saw in the hands of the Pharaoh's family.

33

Ashura, The Eternal Human Epic

It is narrated in Al-Mustadrak alaa al-Sahihain that Um al-Fadhl said: "I put Hussain in the Prophet's (SAAW) lap and I glanced, where I saw the Prophet's eyes pouring tears, so I said: O Prophet of God, may my father and mother be sacrificed for you, what has befallen you? He said: Gabriel visited me and he informed me that my People would kill the son of mine. So, I said: This. And he said: yes, and he gave me his red soil."

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An aerial night view of a city, likely Karbala, showing illuminated domes and minarets. The scene is dark with bright lights from the buildings and streets.

A square QR code with a central logo featuring a stylized 'A' inside a gold square.

 Watch The Video

 Ashura, The Eternal Human Epic

10:15

Ashura... The Eternal Human Epic

Stage Two: The Greatest Sacrifice (The Day of Ashura)

Stage One: Principle and Rejection (Before Ashura)

Rejecting Allegiance to Oppression

In 61 AH, Imam Hussein refused to pledge allegiance to Yazid because leadership had deviated from its values, and silence would legitimize injustice.

"Far from us is humiliation."

The choice was between humiliating allegiance or honorable martyrdom, and the Imam chose the path of dignity.

10th of Muharram, 61AH: The Day of the Epic

Imam Hussein and 72 of his family members and companions were martyred in Karbala.

A Conscious Sacrifice That Shook Consciences

It was a deliberate and declared sacrifice meant to awaken the conscience of the nation from its deep slumber.

Blood Triumphed Over the Sword

Despite their small numbers and the siege they faced, the greatest human epic of heroism and loyalty was born.

The Role of Lady Zaynab (pbuh): Completing the Revolution

She transformed the apparent military defeat into an intellectual victory and a lasting awareness that continued throughout history.

Reform

Justice

Sacrifice

Dignity

Reform

The Imam clearly declared that his movement was not a quest for power, but a mission to reform the nation of his grandfather.

The Goal of the Revolution Was Reform (Before Ashura)

Annual Revival of the Values

Millions of Muslims commemorate the occasion through gatherings and rituals to renew their commitment to the values of reform.

Final Message (An Eternal Call for Freedom):

Ashura is not only for mourning, but a call to uphold reform, no matter the cost.

Ashura is an eternal event that embodies the finest example of sacrifice and nobility in all of human history. It's an event which still resonates today because it was a demand for reform in the world, a call to stimulate humankind emotionally and intellectually, a struggle to purify it, a quest to liberate it from tyranny.

Before the Day of Ashura

In the year 680 AD, upon the death of Muawiyah ibn Abi Sufyan, his son Yazid was wrongfully crowned, becoming ruler of the Islamic world by force. Imam Hussein, the grandson of the prophet Mohammed refused to pay allegiance, declaring, "Yazid is an immoral man who drinks alcohol, is a killer of innocent people, a proponent of immorality. A man like me cannot pay allegiance to a man like him."

When word of his defiance reached Yazid he gave Imam Hussein a stark choice. He told him that he either could pledge his allegiance or be killed. It was a terrible choice, because with just a few words, Imam Hussein knew that he could have spared himself from the tyrant's wrath,

but he remained defiant, holding honor to be a sacred duty, something more valuable even than his own life. Knowing that he was condemning himself, Hussein had only this to say: "The falsely appointed ruler has offered either to draw swords or face humiliation, and we will never submit to being humiliated!"

The deterioration of the situation in the Islamic nation, the rule of tyrants, and the fall of the people into a deep state of absent conscience moved the Imam to lead a process of reform and change, saying: "I have risen to ask for reform in the nation of my grandfather (the Prophet). I want to promote virtue and prevent vice."

The Imam realized that to awaken the nation, a great saga was needed: one that embodied grandeur, heroism, giving and sacrifice. He stirred the conscience of humanity with his words: "If you have no religion and are not afraid of a day where you would be judged, then at least be of free will in your life!"

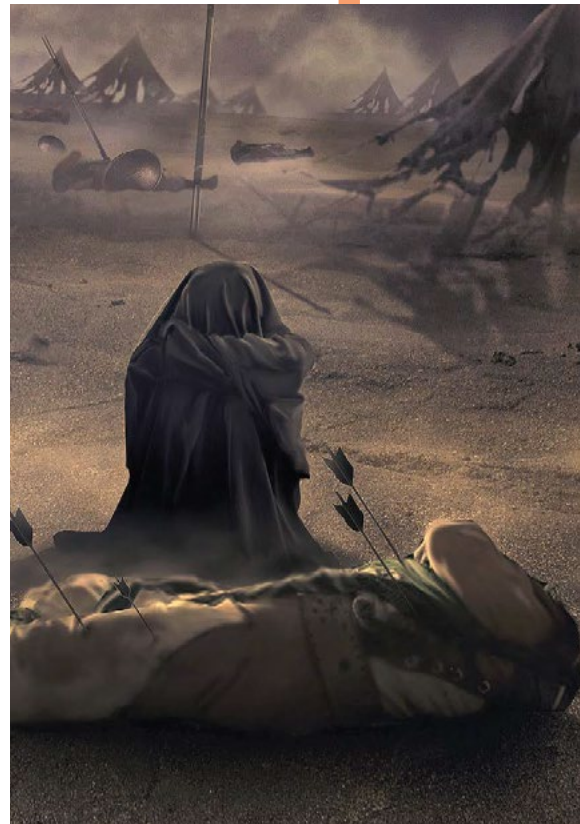
He presented himself and his family as an offering to God and humanity, and announced

his intention very clearly, so as not to be followed except by those who shared his goals, saying: "One who is willing to share our goals, die with us, and is prepared to meet God Almighty, then they shall come with us."

Even as a young child, he knew that the day of his martyrdom was coming, but he did not fear it. The Prophet had told him that it would be a day of enlightenment, and he had eagerly awaited it ever since, saying: "Those who follow us will be martyrs, and those who stay behind will not reach enlightenment."

The day of Ashura

Ashura falls on the tenth day of the month of Muharram, because that was the day when Hussain lost his life resisting Yazid. It happened in the year 61 AH on the battlefield at Karbala. On the banks of the river Euphrates Imam Hussain was slaughtered unjustly in the cruelest, ugliest, and most terroristic way, along with seventy-two other people, including members of his family, his children, and his companions. This happened after a three-day



long siege by the army of Yazid designed to cut off their supply of water, an army that included more than thirty thousand fighters.

Through his selfless resistance and unswerving allegiance to Islam, Ashura became a byword for humanity, heroism, dignity and self-sacrifice.

After the Day of Ashura

The story did not conclude on the Day of Ashura but continued with a great show of humiliation for those defeated. The surviving women and children of the household of the Prophet were captured and paraded on saddle-less camels in caravans that crossed the nation from the province of Kufa (the modern city of Najaf, Iraq) up to Damascus and the Levant, and all through the main towns along the coast.

In addition, the severed heads of Imam Hussain and his companions were raised on long spears, a fate that was usually reserved for captured mercenaries and bandits, and which truly shows the depths of Yazid's contempt.

The revolution of Hussein would not have succeeded without the role played by his sister, Zainab (granddaughter of the holy Prophet), who was one of the captives. She embraced the ideals of the revolution, reporting its aims and narrating the tragedies and torments of Ashura to the completely Muslim nation.

On the Day of Ashura, she reached her hands beneath the body of her beheaded brother, Hussein, cast her gaze to the sky and addressed Allah, saying: "O' God, please accept this sacrifice from us."

What about now?

As if taking Zainab's word to heart, hundreds of millions of people have accepted Hussain's sacrifice. Muslims and Non-Muslims alike from around the world have come together to mourn and commemorate the occasion of Ashura every year during the months of Muharram and Safar in the Arabic calendar. Sermons are given nightly, stories are retold, lessons are retaught, and people weep for the terrible sacrifices that the Imam and his family made.

His example has endured for fourteen centuries, and on each anniversary people still pledge to the Imam to move forward in his footsteps and to always take a stand against evil and injustice.

These ceremonies include a long list of rituals. Some of them were reportedly encouraged by the Household of the Prophet (Ahl ul-Bayt), such as visiting, the shrine of Imam Hussain, poetry readings, lectures and retellings of the lessons learned. Other forms of remembrance do not have historical roots but have been shaped by the traditions of each community as it found its own way of remembering Ashura. Some held marches, while others held cultural activities such as theatre and film. For others practices like Self-flagellation (Tatbir) have stirred debate and opposition in the Shiite community and have been banned by some Shia scholars.

The Ashura period is not limited to two months but extends throughout the year, with visits to Imam Hussain's shrine, sermons, and crying over him at various religious and social events.

Every time we visit the shrine of Imam Hussain, we recite "Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Adam, elite of Allah. Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Noah, Allah's prophet. Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Abraham, the admirer of Allah. Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Moses, the one who spoke to Allah. Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Jesus, the Spirit of Allah. Peace be upon you O' inheritor of Mohammed, the one beloved to Allah." This ingrains in our beings the knowledge that the path of Allah and the path of righteousness are identical journeys that are woven into history, connecting human beings to Allah.

The revolutions of the prophets were revolutions against deviation from the line of Allah. They were uprisings against tyrants and darkness, and the revolution of Imam Hussain was no different. He sought to awaken the world before the Day of Judgment and create in the hearts of human beings a power to drive them forward towards reform.



Assessment Questions

Part Three | Lesson 33

Take ten minutes to match the following Quranic verses with the correct interpretation:

Quranic verses:

1. "Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], O people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification." (Quran 33:33)
2. "Indeed, those who abuse Allah and His Messenger - Allah has cursed them in this world and the Hereafter and prepared for them a humiliating punishment." (Quran 33:57)
3. "They [are those who] fulfill [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread. And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [saying], 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude. Indeed, We

fear from our Lord a Day austere and distressful." So Allah will protect them from the evil of that Day and give them radiance and happiness" (Quran 76:7-11)

4. "...say, 'Come, let us call our sons and your sons, our women and your women, ourselves and yourselves, then supplicate earnestly [together] and invoke the curse of Allah upon the liars [among us].'" (Quran 3:61)
5. "Say, [O Muhammad], 'I do not ask you for this message any payment [but] only good will through kinship.'" (Quran 42:23)

Interpretations of the verses:

- ☐ Whoever causes harm to Allah and His Messenger through the killing of Husayn (AS), or through their consent for this act deserves the curse of Allah in this world and in the Hereafter.

- ☐ It is established that the purity of Imam Husayn is complete and free from abomination.
- ☐ Husayn (AS) is one of the four who Allah commanded His Messenger (PBUHF) to take with him to curse the Christians.
- ☐ Allah praised al-Husayn (AS) for his tenderness and altruism.
- ☐ In the Quran, God commanded Muslims to love Husayn (AS) and his fellowship.





About the Author

Abbas is a member of the Economic and Financial Committee of the State Council for the 2023–2027 term, and the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Merit Group. He brings nearly three decades of outstanding leadership experience and a proven record of achieving high growth in prestigious global organizations.

Internationally recognized as a thought leader, tactical and strategic expert, and trusted business advisor, Abbas specializes in the analysis, development, and execution of strategies. He is distinguished by his expertise in risk management, change management, and human capital development, and advises governments and institutions in realizing their economic aspirations across diverse sectors.

He has more than 23 years of practical experience serving in several senior leadership positions, including Chief Executive Officer, Chief Strategy Officer of an investment group, and Chief Internal Auditor of a government group, with a constant focus on financial profitability and sustainable growth.

In December 2017, Abbas became the first Gulf national to be elected by the global group Mazars for admission as an equity partner in the international group, which has more than 300 offices in over 100 countries. This took place at the CARL Partners Conference, held in Berlin. Mazars is a multinational organization specializing in audit, accounting, tax, and advisory services.



Abbas has successfully led two comprehensive transformation assignments for major government groups, with total assets amounting to billions of US dollars. He has also successfully developed five start-up companies.

He is the founder of the training program and the author of Strategic Management Procedures – Your Strategy: How Do You Assess, Formulate, Implement, and Govern It? The program is accredited by the Chartered Management Institute in the United Kingdom, in accordance with its professional standards for developing the capabilities of managers and leaders to formulate and implement strategic plans and translate them into effective daily operational practice.

The first Gulf national, and one of only a few individuals worldwide, to obtain a license from the International Council of Management Consulting Institutes (ICMCI)—a United Nations-licensed non-governmental organization—to serve as a management consultant in fields including strategic management, leadership development, organizational development, restructuring systems, and financial and administrative systems.

He was awarded the title of Fellow in Management Consulting, the highest level of professional membership, granted to those who can demonstrate evidence of having made significant contributions to the management consulting profession. This status had been granted to fewer than one thousand management consultants worldwide, according to 2010 data.

He was authorized by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) in the United Kingdom as one of only two experts outside the United Kingdom empowered to appoint and assess managers eligible to receive the globally recognized title of Chartered Manager Fellow, the highest international distinction that professional managers can obtain. Nearly 30 Chartered Managers have graduated under his supervision.

He has led numerous major training programs aimed at developing the strategic and leadership skills of hundreds of managers and chief executives over several years, based on the strategic management and leadership programs of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) in the United Kingdom.

He led the strategic reform program for one of the largest business and investment groups in the Sultanate, which included developing the strategic capabilities of the group's senior leadership team, including its chief executive officers, in close coordination with Manchester Business School in the United Kingdom. The program covered 50 companies across six sectors.

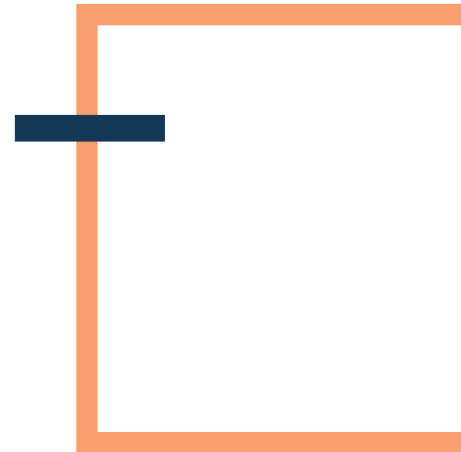
He has been deeply concerned with the issue of jobseekers in the Sultanate of Oman since 2003, when he presented his strategic study, Omanisation at the Top of the Career Pyramid, as a proposed approach to addressing this challenge. The study centered on the idea of establishing a career guidance center and improving the quality of the national workforce supply in order to meet the growing demand for highly qualified talent. Since then, he has presented and proposed numerous strategic studies, in line with contemporary developments, and has participated in seminars and conferences aimed at addressing this issue.

Driven by his sense of social responsibility, he has guided and supported hundreds of Omanis from diverse professional backgrounds in planning their career paths and developing their own enterprises, in light of new economic, technological, social, and environmental developments. He has also conducted a number of voluntary workshops in this field.

He is the author of *How to Plan Your Career Path: An Introduction to Developing Your Work Portfolio*, which was accredited in 2009 by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) in the United Kingdom as one of the approved references in the fields of “Developing Yourself as a Manager and Leader” and “Career Path Planning.” It was also classified among the recommended books for reading.

He is also the author of *The Sultanate of Oman: A Promising Investment Destination – A Guide to Establishing a Successful Business Venture in the Sultanate of Oman*. The book sheds light on key economic, social, legal, and regulatory areas, and provides a high-level summary of the important factors to be considered when investing in the Sultanate.

He has obtained numerous international academic and professional qualifications, including Certified Public Accountant (CPA) from the United States, Certified Management Consultant (CMC) from the United Kingdom, Chartered Manager (CMgr) from the United Kingdom, and Certified Fraud Examiner (CFE) from the United States. Abbas holds two bachelor’s degrees: one in Accounting and the other in Economics.



Other Books by the Author

Available for Free Download

Sculpt Your Life

I wrote this book for you—whether you are a chief executive officer, an employee at any level, a jobseeker, a businessperson, a homemaker, a retiree, or a school or university student. I hope this book will serve as a source of support in managing your life and attaining the reassurance, happiness, and strength you seek.

In his foreword to the book, **Dr. Mustafa Abu Saad** writes: “The Making of Life is the title of an authored work, a blog, and a book by a distinguished and creative individual who has accumulated experience, skills, and knowledge over years of work, contribution, diligence, and productivity—through writing, mentoring, training, and consulting. The honorable Professor Abbas Al-Hamid—may Allah preserve him—has embodied in this scientific and knowledge-based work a practical guide that accompanies us step by step toward achieving the greater purpose: becoming capable of shaping our own lives by ourselves and with our own hands, so that we do not leave them in the hands of others to manipulate, in an age in which minds, souls, and tastes are being manipulated. The author begins this journey with the most important step upon which the foundation of change and knowledge-and-skill development is built: self-building. This is achieved through gaining



mastery in understanding our goals in life, how our selves are shaped, and the factors that influence the self, in order to build a rational understanding of the human soul.

He then takes us on a journey to face life and its future challenges with insight and rationality, defining our career paths and showing us how to understand and master them through practical models presented in a work that combines experience, knowledge, mastery in understanding reality, the ability to derive its mechanisms, and foresight grounded in knowledge and insight regarding a professional future that is developing at an extraordinary speed.” The book is supported by 29 educational videos, along with a number of models and illustrative diagrams explaining the concepts and techniques presented, enabling the reader to understand and master them.



Strategic Management Procedures

It gives me great pleasure to place in your hands the second edition of my book, Strategic Management Procedures, hoping that it will support you not only in managing your business venture or professional life, but in managing your entire life.

In his foreword to the book, **Alan D. Whitman, former Chairman of Baker Tilly International, writes:** "In his book Strategic Management Procedures – Your Strategy: How to Assess, Formulate, Implement, and Govern It, Abbas Al-Hamid embodies his extensive experience and sharp insight in a comprehensive and practical guide to strategy formulation and implementation.

From business schools to leading consulting firms, there is no shortage of strategy concepts and techniques. Abbas cuts through the confusion in a coherent and sound manner, through a step-by-step approach and examples that are very far removed from mere theorizing. He does all this within the context of today's fast-paced environment.

You can read and apply the book from cover to cover, and use it as an invaluable guide to critical thinking and problem-solving."

Live Happily

With the turbulence of the world, the accelerating pace of life, and the growing challenges, hardships, and changes that unsettle people's lives, people have become in dire need of something that eases the trials of this world and guides them in how to strive within it toward success, tranquility, and strength. Allah, Mighty and Majestic, revealed the Qur'an as guidance and direction for people toward that which brings them righteousness and happiness in this world and the Hereafter, as well as healing for what is within their hearts and purification for their souls. Yet the dominant culture in the world has distanced us from the Qur'an. We have come to read it—when we do read it—without reflecting on its meanings, contemplating its verses, or truly affirming them.

Instead, we have gathered around the books and lectures of those who do not believe in Allah and who are unaware of the true nature of life. From them, we seek and draw remedies for our crises and psychological problems, and from them we learn how to develop and manage ourselves. We have followed them without discussion or reflection, promoted them within our societies and among our children and families, and been carried along by them despite their profound divergence from the divine method. As a result, our families and societies have gradually become Muslim in outward appearance, yet Western in culture, despite the widespread prevalence of psychological illnesses in Western society. For example, one out of every three American adults experiences depression at any given period of time.



This is what led me to attempt to read the Qur'an with reflection, contemplation, and inspired insight, in light of some well-known Qur'anic commentaries, seeking from its verses awareness, guidance, and remedy for the reality of our contemporary life, with all its debates and disturbances. I then wrote these reflections and insights while maintaining, as much as possible, simplicity of language and conciseness of meaning, so that each verse or passage from a verse would not exceed a few lines. This booklet addresses Surahs Al-Isrā' and Al-Kahf. I did not address all the Qur'anic verses in these two surahs; rather, I limited myself to those from which I was able to draw direct guidance relevant to the reality of our lives. If I have overlooked a verse, or a beautiful meaning within a verse, that is only due to the limitation of my knowledge and my own shortcomings.

The Islamic Intellectual System

This book seeks to provide logical and reassuring answers to many of the major questions that press upon the minds of many of us. It explains Islamic thought in simple language, presenting it as an integrated and interconnected system within its broader human context.

Sheikh Khalid Al-Mulla, Chairman of the Iraqi Scholars Group, said: “This is a highly distinguished book of a very elevated standard. What makes it distinctive is that it addresses the Islamic dimension and the divine methodology that Allah Almighty intended through the sending of our Master Muhammad, peace be upon him. Many people are unable to perceive this methodology except through such profoundly important propositions, presented at the right time and in the right context, especially at a time when arrows are being directed against Islam—even by some of its own followers.”

Sheikh Badr bin Salim bin Hamdan Al-Abri said: “I have reviewed the book and found it to be unifying in spirit, calling for what is shared within the Ummah and for the making of the human being. This is precisely what we hope for at the present time. The book is coherent and methodical.”

Dr. Salim bin Saeed Al-Busaidi said: “Were I to offer advice to a parent who wishes to present his children with sound Islamic thought in this difficult age—an age of intellectual conflicts, technological octopuses, and media networks; were I to offer advice to someone who wishes to fortify his children with conscious thought, a refined spirit, and noble values—I would not hesitate to recommend this book.”

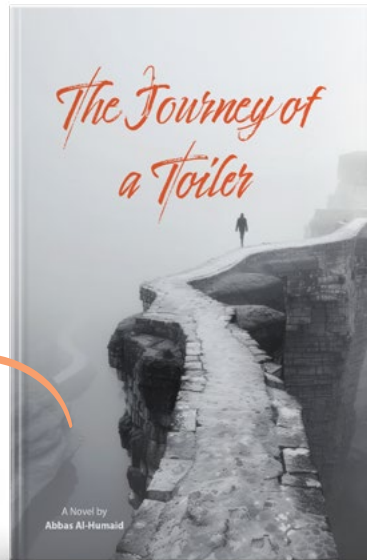
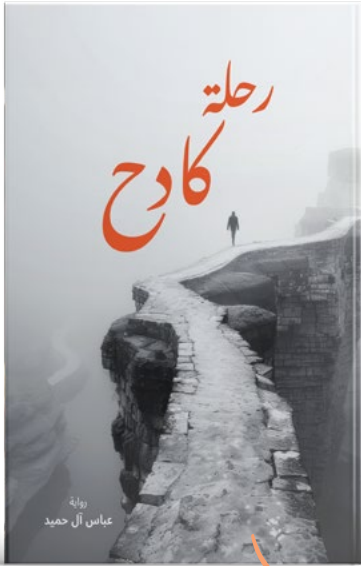


The Journey of a Toiler

The Journey of a Toiler is a novel about a poor orphaned young man whose circumstances did not allow him to pursue regular university studies. He struggles with all his strength to achieve success, drawing upon certain career-planning techniques and Islamic concepts to develop himself and his abilities. Life then confronts him with all its force and complexity, as though deliberately challenging him.

Arab media figure **Dr. Yahya Abu Zakariya** said of the novel: “Abbas Al-Hamid, with an engaging, flowing, gentle, and sincere language, has succeeded in presenting us with a different image. The structure of the writer’s narrative meets a glowing sincerity. The writer often evokes Allah Almighty, who was his companion on the journey of searching for relief and a way out of every hardship and pain that befell him. The Journey of a Toiler by Abbas Al-Hamid is worthy of being read, and worthy of being transformed into an academic curriculum in the Sultanate of Oman and in the Arab world—especially at this critical Arab moment, when Arab generations are searching for models and role examples from which to begin a new process of building.”

Dr. Kifah Fayyad, trainer and consultant in human skills development, said of it: “The Journey of a Toiler is a unique book by a writer who dared to raise powerful and courageous questions about human existence and its Creator, and answered them through a series of situations he personally lived and experienced. The result came from the depths of the heart, reaching the depths of the reader, making him reflect and think from different angles. What distinguishes the book is the realism of its situations, with their places and names, narrated in an easy and smooth style. You feel as though the writer is telling them to you face to face. You live the situation and are moved by it. He answers the questions he raised at the beginning of the book, and he also answers the questions that arise in your mind at that very moment, as if he already knew them. The Journey of a Striver represents an important addition in the age of the information explosion. It detaches you from one reality and carries you into another—one of great depth and profound impact. It is true that the title of the book is The Journey of a Striver, but through his striving, its author brings this journey to your mind and heart.”



This book has been designed with precision and exceptional care to serve as a source of inspiration and cultural enrichment for every seeker of the essence of the Islamic intellectual system. It combines scholarly depth with practical application, making it ideal both for direct reading by interested readers and as a reference within foundational religious curricula.

The curriculum aims to present the Islamic intellectual system in a coherent and comprehensive manner, employing methods of research, analysis, and discussion in an engaging style and contemporary language that connects with modern global culture.

The book has received commendation from a distinguished group of scholars and thinkers of the Islamic Ummah from various schools of thought, including Sunni, Ibadi, and Shia traditions. This can be verified in the documented foreword at the beginning of the book.

The book has been enriched with twenty-seven educational videos, in addition to numerous practical examples and illustrative diagrams, enhancing the reader's understanding and mastery of the concepts presented.

I invite you to explore the pages of this book and discover for yourself the richness and depth of the Islamic intellectual system, and how it can illuminate your path and your practical application of Islam in our modern age.



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