ABBAS AL HUMAID

The Islamic Intellectual Framework

THE ISLAMIC THEORY OF ORIGINATION PROJECT

THE ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW AND THE PROJECT'S FOUNDATIONAL VISION

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First English Edition — 2026

The Islamic Theory of Origination Project

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NOTES TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

Qur'anic renderings. Unless otherwise indicated, Qur'anic passages are rendered by the project directly from the Arabic text for clarity and terminological consistency. These interpretive renderings do not replace the Arabic text.

Transliteration. Recurring Arabic terms are generally presented in light, readable transliteration in running text. More fully diacritised forms are retained where terminological precision requires them—especially at first technical introduction, in notes, and in the reference apparatus.

English-edition reading aids. The brief terminological footnotes provide supplementary explanations for English readers. In the project's English title, "Origination" names the human being's complete existential journey—its beginning, stages, purpose, responsibility, and encounter with God—within which human becoming unfolds over time.

HOW TO CITE THIS BOOK

Al Humaid, Abbas. The Islamic Intellectual Framework. First English ed. Muscat, Sultanate of Oman: The Islamic Theory of Origination Project, 2026.

Part of the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

The Islamic Theory of Origination is an interpretive intellectual project situated within the Islamic worldview. The project studies human becoming, existential movement, growth, conduct, and the human being's moral and spiritual vocation. It is a human endeavour: it is not identical with Islam itself and does not replace creed, jurisprudence, Qur'anic exegesis, or specialised disciplines. The project is not one book but a system of six books, each with its own question, function, and voice. They complement one another without duplicating one another's role.

THE SIX-BOOK MAP

1. **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the principal exposition of the cosmic vision.
2. **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text.
3. **The Immortal Self** — expands on the human self, its becoming, and its trajectory.
4. **No Limits** — brings the laws into practical focus and engages with contemporary theories of human growth.
5. **Live Happily** — the gateway to contemplation and lived engagement.
6. **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview includes, at its beginning, a concise guide to the project, its books, and its reading paths, and at its end a simplified reference glossary of the project's terms. These two components serve the governing reference text itself; they are neither a separate volume nor a seventh book within the six-book project.

THE PLACE OF THIS BOOK IN THE PROJECT

This book presents the Islamic worldview from which the Islamic Theory of Origination proceeds, explaining the reality of existence, the human being's relation to the Lord, the purpose of life, and life's major governing regularities. It is the book that explains the project's worldview foundation and provides the other books with their cosmic and creedal ground, without replacing the governing reference text.

What Has Been Said about the Book

Selections from the foreword and responses to earlier editions

Dr Salim bin Said Al Busaidi
FROM THE FOREWORD

"Some books astonish the mind… yet leave behind a deep spiritual dryness. Others touch the spirit… but leave a painful intellectual emptiness. Nothing, however, delights the self like a book that nourishes mind and spirit together… This book is truly remarkable in its content, presentation, and language… It fully deserves a place in every home library."

Shaykh Khalid al-Mulla, President of the Association of Iraqi Scholars

"A book of a very high and distinctive standard. What makes it distinctive is that it draws on the Islamic dimension and its revealed method… through propositions of great importance for their time and place."

Sayyid Munir al-Khabbaz

"I found it an outstanding book. It brings out the essential unity between Shiism and Islam, demonstrates the firmness of its foundations and supports, and reveals the greatness of its principles and values… The book shines with Qur'anic light and forms a beautiful necklace of prophetic guidance."

Dr Muhammad Salim al-Awwa

"I read the book and was pleased by the precision of its information and the economy of its presentation."

Shaykh Haidar Hobbollah

"The researcher Abbas Al Humaid seeks to offer a concentrated vision that contributes to building mature religious awareness for future generations. He connects the components of the religious system... so that religion may be understood as an integrated construction rather than as fragments severed from their wider contexts."

Shaykh Badr bin Salim bin Hamdan al-Abri

"I found the book unifying in spirit, calling the community towards what it shares and towards the formation of the human being... It is coherent and methodical. The author presents young readers with a contemporary and systematic account of Islam that holds together two dimensions: the human being and the building of civilisation."

Shaykh Hasan Musa al-Saffar

"I found it fully suited to the purpose for which it was designed: a foundational curriculum for religious education. It truly offers an admirable response to the need for curricula that present religious thought as an integrated, interconnected system, in clear scholarly language and an engaging contemporary style."

Habib Salim al-Mashhur

"This book fills a major gap in the field of education... It brings together emotional and intellectual formation and, in doing so, offers an integrated curriculum... suited to a new generation living through a vast knowledge revolution."

Shaykh Ali al-Dahnin

"It is distinguished by an academic approach suited to its intended readers, by the simple and fluent language used throughout, by the gradual movement from one idea to another, and by the support of ideas with examples drawn from life."

Shaykh Abd al-Karim al-Ha'iri

"I found it ordered and coherent, like a necklace of pearls in the arrangement of its thought. Its use of Qur'anic verses and transmitted reports gives it light and blessing... The author adds what contemporary readers need from philosophers, thinkers, and people of religion... The style is excellent and contemporary."

Shaykh Shafiq Jaradi

"A successful endeavour: the formulation is very fine, the purpose of the work is clear and important, and its style is closely aligned with that purpose. I pray that it becomes a path through which this Muslim generation grows in awareness of its identity and civilisational place."

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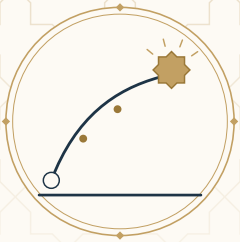
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PART ONE

THE ISLAMIC STRATEGIC DIRECTION



PART ONE

The Story of Life

A Summary of the Islamic Intellectual Framework

"The life of this world is nothing but play and diversion, and the abode of the hereafter is better for those who are mindful of God. Will you not use reason?" (Q 6:32).

What is the story of life? Who are we? Where did we come from? Where are we going? And how much scope do we have to shape our lives and our destiny through our choices?

The story of life is summed up in the words of God, exalted is he: "*Indeed we belong to God, and to him we shall return*" (Q 2:156). From God is the origin of our existence, and to him is our return; the Islamic intellectual framework is ordered around this truth.

God, glorified and exalted, is generous and inexhaustible in his giving. He created all beings and sustains them in existence. In the language of Islamic wisdom, this bestowal is called fayḍ

(emanation)[1]: every existent receives from him according to its potential and receptivity, and God has appointed a measure for everything: *"Indeed, We created all things according to a measure"* (Q 54:49).

God further bestowed his favour by setting existence in motion—a movement free of futility, through which the receptivities of creatures unfold as they move towards the ends for which they were created. The transformations we witness as beings pass through successive stages help us glimpse one aspect of this motion, while its reality remains wider than our limited images: *"Did you suppose that We created you in vain, and that you would not be returned to Us?"* (Q 23:115).

This movement proceeds by God's will through the successive stages of life, from this world to the hereafter, and within laws and regularities[2] that neither exist independently of him nor ever depart from his wisdom: *"You will never find any change in God's way, and you will never find any alteration in God's way"* (Q 35:43).

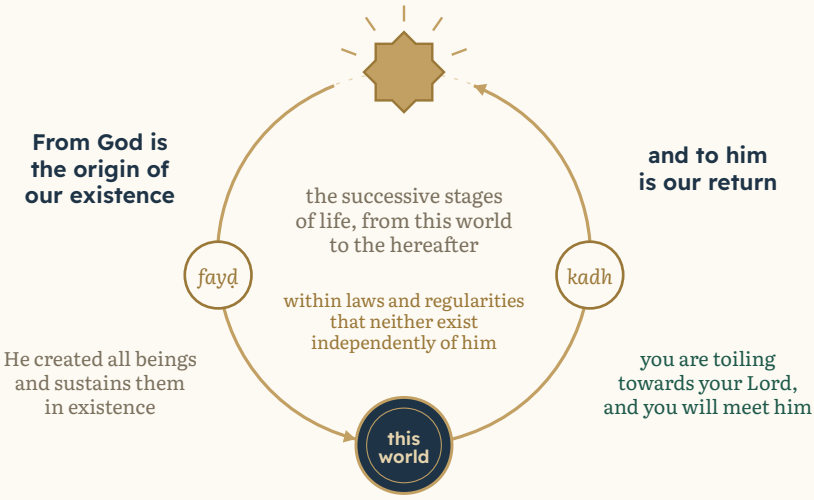
In the visible world, God honoured the human being and made humanity the locus of vicegerency[3] and moral responsibility, having granted the will, awareness, and receptivity needed to bear the Trust. This honour implies neither independence from God nor absolute human centrality; God

1 Fayḍ (emanation): a philosophical term for God's granting existence to contingent beings. In this book it names the continuous divine bestowal of existence, received by each creature according to its receptivity and preparedness; the term alone does not settle every question concerning divine will or doctrine.

2 Sunan (sing. sunna): God's established ways and regularities in creation, constant yet never independent of his will and wisdom.

3 Istikhlāf (vicegerency): a general Trust and responsibility assigned to humankind on earth. Its realisation in moral character and human perfection unfolds by degrees according to how faithfully a person embodies servanthood and justice, discharges the Trust, and cultivates the earth. It implies neither independence from God nor unrestricted delegation.

measures responsibility according to the clarification that has reached each person and their practical scope[4]: *"When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration"* (Q 15:29).



"Indeed we belong to God, and to him we shall return": the Islamic intellectual framework is ordered around this truth

As God gives a person more, and as their practical scope widens, so do their responsibility and the Trust they bear. The depth of their servanthood, however, is determined by the direction of their response; their nearness or distance is read through the interaction between the powers and perfections actualised within them and that response. The human being has borne a tremendous Trust that was offered to the heavens,

4 Practical scope: the domain upon which responsibility rests in a person's real circumstances, in view of knowledge, intention, Actual Capacity, obstacles, and the available means the person can put in place. It does not guarantee an outcome, and an outside observer cannot fully determine another person's practical scope.

the earth, and the mountains: *"We offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and were wary of it; yet the human being bore it—he has indeed been most unjust, most ignorant"* (Q 33:72).

Nor would God lay this Trust upon the human being and then leave them aimless, without the guidance, gracious care, and help that enable them to fulfil their responsibility: *"Does the human being suppose that he will be left aimless?"* (Q 75:36).

The framework reads fitra[5], the covenant of lordship, and the pledge of servanthood as interconnected meanings that clarify the grounding of this guidance and what responding to it requires. Fitra is an original ground in the human being's creation through which the person is oriented, in a general way, towards truth and servanthood. The covenant bears witness to God's lordship, while the pledge makes clear what this requires in life: worshipping God and avoiding what turns a person away from him. This does not mean that fitra or the covenant removes the need for revelation and learning; a person's detailed responsibility remains measured by the clarification that has reached them and by their practical scope (*al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, "The Fitra of Creation upon Divine Unity", no. 2; *al-Mīzān*, commentary on Q 7:172–174).

For this reason, God placed at humanity's disposal the regularities and beings of the universe that assist in discharging the Trust, fulfilling responsibility, and journeying towards him—without thereby granting humanity absolute existential superiority: *"He subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, all together, from him"* (Q 45:13).

5 Fitra: the distinctive mode in which human reality is created, comprising a general, undifferentiated ground of truth known by presence, an original love of absolute perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood. It is neither detailed conceptual knowledge nor completed religious awareness; its manifestation and the identification of its object require revelation, intellect, and tazkiya.

Nearness to God is not spatial. It describes a person's course of becoming in relation to God. Nearness or distance is understood through the interaction between the powers and perfections that have become actual within the self and the direction of its response to truth and servanthood, according to the clarification that has reached the person and their practical scope. A creature's ontological dependence on God—its subsistence through him and lack of independence—is a universal truth that embraces every creature, not an acquired station: *"And the foremost, the foremost—it is they who are brought near"* (Q 56:10–11).

Yet with all the means God has subjected to them, human beings remain responsible, within practical scope, for the direction they take: do they draw nearer to God or move away from him? This appears in their toil and work in this world, and in directing their will, wisdom, and capacities towards truth and goodness: *"As for the one who transgressed and preferred the life of this world, the Blaze is the refuge; and as for the one who feared standing before his Lord and restrained the self from caprice, the Garden is the refuge"* (Q 79:37–41).

Our happiness or misery is bound to what the self becomes, the direction it takes, and whether it draws nearer to or farther from God. In the hereafter, God makes the realities and effects of deeds manifest under his judgement. Recompense is therefore neither reduced to an autonomous effect within the self nor separated from his justice, mercy, forgiveness, and the intercession of those to whom he grants leave: *"On that Day people will come forth separately to be shown their deeds; whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it"* (Q 99:6–8).

Because of the gravity of the misery that may befall a person through distance from God, God graced humanity with guidance: he sent messengers, revealed scriptures and laws, and

raised guides who made his path clear. The succession of messages culminated in our Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, and the noble Qur'an was sent down as guidance, tazkiya[6], and teaching: *"It is he who raised among the unlettered a Messenger from among themselves, reciting his signs to them, purifying them, and teaching them the Book and wisdom"* (Q 62:2).

The human being does not live in isolation from the universe or from other people. Each person is a social being who influences others and is influenced by them, and the self takes shape in the thick of life through the interplay of fitra, body, and preparedness; upbringing, environment, experience, and trial; what a person knows, loves, intends, and chooses; and what they do and repeat: *"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"* (Q 84:6).

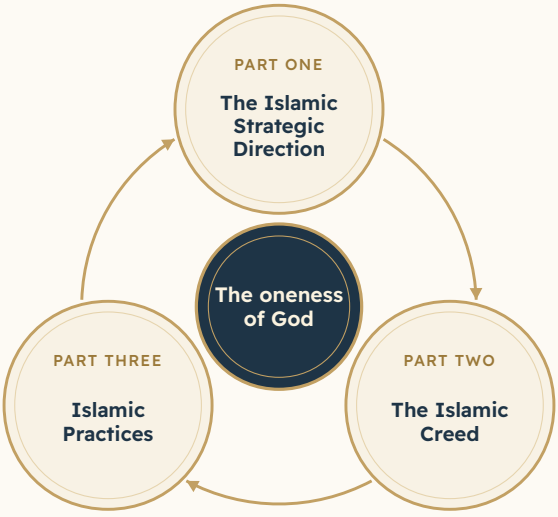
And because goodness does not reach completion within the bounds of the individual, Islam has made helping people free themselves from injustice and corruption, and counselling one another to truth and to patience, a shared responsibility according to practical scope and position: *"By Time: the human being is indeed in loss—except those who believe, do righteous deeds, counsel one another to truth, and counsel one another to patience"* (Q 103:1–3).

Yet life's preoccupations, cravings, and challenges may divert a person from this direction and from their responsibility: *"The pursuit of ever more distracts you, until you visit the graves"* (Q 102:1–2).

For this reason, the Islamic framework does not confine itself to bare theoretical assent. God legislated a system of worship, ethics, and rulings that nurtures a person's sense of responsibility towards the self and the world and joins belief to

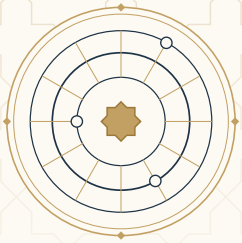
6 Tazkiya: cleansing the self of veils and vices, developing its powers and perfections, and redirecting it towards truth and servanthood through God's guidance and aid.

daily practice. Its forms include ritual prayer; enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong; and loving devotion to the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, and the Ahl al-Bayt[7], peace be upon them: *"To him ascends the good word, and righteous work raises it"* (Q 35:10), and *"prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing"* (Q 29:45).



Belief does not remain an abstract idea: it gives the human being direction and is reflected in worship, work, and relationships

7 Ahl al-Bayt: literally "the People of the House"—the family of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family.



PART ONE

The Strategy of Creation

"We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them in play. We created them only in truth, though most of them do not know"

(Q 44:38–39).

The Islamic understanding of the strategy of creation begins with the oneness of God[1]. Existence is not purposeless motion, and belief does not remain an abstract idea: it gives the human being direction and is reflected in worship, work, and relationships. This chapter therefore connects what we believe with how we live.

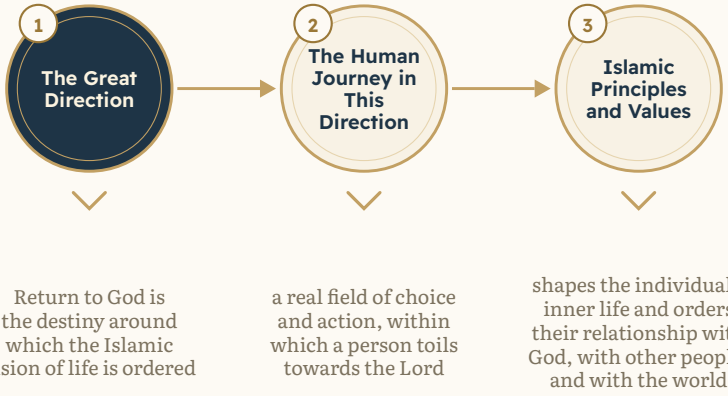
The Great Direction

God did not create the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them in vain or for mere diversion. Creation is grounded in truth, and existence unfolds within an order founded on wisdom and purpose. God, exalted is he, said: *"We did not create*

1 Tawḥīd: the affirmation of God's oneness, the axis around which Islamic belief and practice are ordered.

the heaven and the earth and all that lies between them in vain" (Q 38:27), and: *"We did not create the heavens and the earth and all that lies between them in play. We created them only in truth"* (Q 44:38–39).

These verses show that the human journey does not end at the bounds of this world; it is oriented towards the return to God: *"Did you suppose that We created you in vain, and that you would not be returned to Us?"* (Q 23:115), and *"Indeed we belong to God, and to him we shall return"* (Q 2:156). Return to God is the destiny around which the Islamic vision of life is ordered. Nearness or distance depends on what takes shape within a person and on the direction of their response.



The Islamic understanding of the strategy of creation begins with the oneness of God. Existence is not purposeless motion

The Human Journey in This Direction

How does this direction take shape in a person's life? And how does daily toil become part of the return to God?

The Qur'an answers: *"He created death and life to test which of you is best in deed"* (Q 67:2). God created life in a world where

strength and weakness, good and evil, ease and hardship stand side by side. This gives the human being a real field of choice and action. Within it, a person toils towards the Lord, responds to guidance or turns away, and the self takes shape through what they were given, what they encounter, and what they choose and repeat. Through will and choice, and within the power God has granted, a person participates in shaping their own shakila[2] and what they become. God's creation, guidance, and aid precede and sustain that participation; it is never independent of him: *"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"* (Q 84:6).

This movement is expressed in the liberation of the human being from injustice, corruption, ignorance, and servitude to anything other than God, and in the passage from depths of darkness into light: *"God is the Guardian of those who believe; he brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light"* (Q 2:257). Liberation here is not a slogan detached from becoming; it is the fruit of knowledge, work, striving, and responsibility.

Human growth includes whatever has actually become a quality of the self: knowledge, understanding, will, settled traits, and powers, together with such realised qualities as wisdom, justice, mercy, courage, patience, and truthfulness. Initial capacities widen the field of action unless, through practice, they become stable dispositions of the self. External resources—opportunities, wealth, office, and bodily health—remain forms of instrumental expansion. Their ethical value depends on the direction in which they are used: they may serve truth or falsehood. Happiness and inner tranquillity are fruits of uprightness, and Qur'anic tranquillity is a graduated

2 Shakila (shākila): the inner configuration that makes certain modes of perception, response, and action more likely to issue from a person without compelling them.

manifestation of nearness. The ultimate purpose is not reduced to either of them, and neither outward calm nor a felt sense of happiness can, by itself, establish a person's station with God.

Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr explains in Khilāfat al-Insān wa-Shahādat al-Anbiyāʾ (Human Vicegerency and the Witness of the Prophets) that the vicegerency of the human community upon the earth means founding social relations upon servanthood to God, freeing the human being from exploitation, ignorance, and ṭāghūt[3], and bearing responsibility for cultivating the earth in truth. Honour is thus joined to moral responsibility, and the human being's place on earth remains inseparable from their abiding dependence on God.

When Muslims grasped part of this message, their history saw civilisational endeavours that contributed to science, learning, the development of communities, and service to humanity. The value of those endeavours is not measured by historical ascendancy alone, but by the extent to which they turned faith into knowledge, work, and service to others: *"You are the best community brought forth for humankind"* (Q 3:110).

Islamic Principles and Values

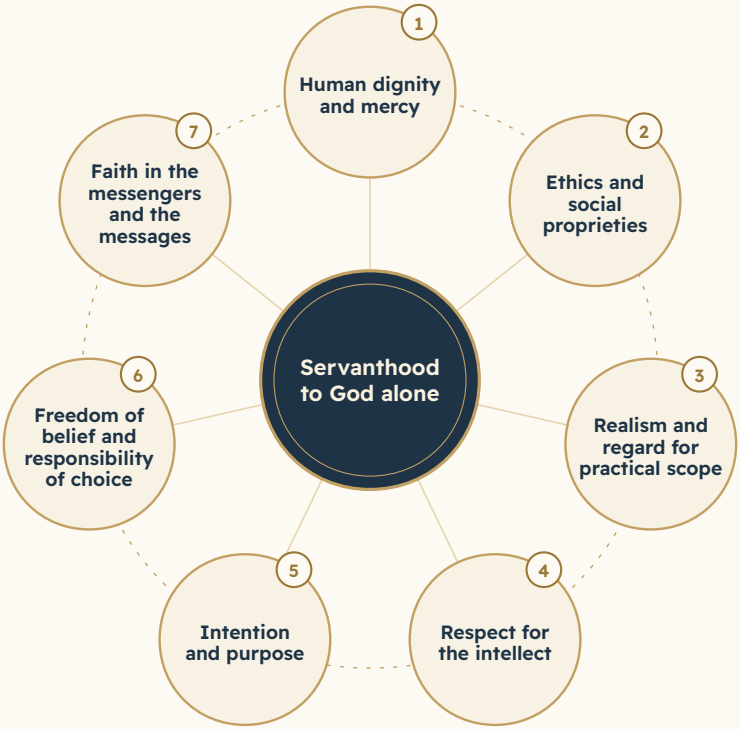
This vision is embodied in a system of principles and values that shapes the individual's inner life and orders their relationship with God, with other people, and with the world. Among the most important are the following:

Servanthood to God alone. This is the root around which worldview and conduct are ordered. Servanthood means that God is the human being's Lord, highest reference, and ultimate purpose, so that intention, obedience, and life are ordered

3 Ṭāghūt: any false absolute or tyrannical power served or obeyed in place of God.

under his good pleasure; no person, power, or desire may become an object of worship that contests God's right in the heart or in life: *"Judgement belongs to God alone; he has commanded that you serve none but him"* (Q 12:40).

Human dignity and mercy. Islam came as a mercy to all the worlds. It founded human dignity upon the single origin of creation, and made mindfulness of God and righteous action—not race, wealth, or lineage—the criterion of distinction: *"We sent you only as a mercy to the worlds"* (Q 21:107), and *"The noblest of you in God's sight is the most mindful of God among you"* (Q 49:13).



Islamic principles and values: servanthood to God alone is the root around which worldview and conduct are ordered

Ethics and social proprieties. Belief is not separate from the way people are treated: the sincerity of faith is shown in justice, mercy, trustworthiness, and the safeguarding of rights. The Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, is reported to have said: "*I was sent only to complete the noble traits of character*" (al-Bayhaqī, al-Sunan al-Kubrā, Book of Testimonies).

Realism and regard for practical scope. The revealed law addresses the human being as they are—with their body, needs, and limits. It measures responsibility within practical scope and lifts hardship in cases of inability and unusual difficulty: *"God does not burden any self beyond its capacity"* (Q 2:286).

Respect for the intellect. The Qur'an calls for inquiry, reflection, and reasoned argument. It makes the intellect a path to understanding signs and distinguishing a true claim from a false one, without suggesting that the intellect can encompass what lies beyond its domain: *"That you rise up for God, in pairs and singly, and then reflect"* (Q 34:46).

Intention and purpose. The value of a deed cannot be separated from the purpose that moves it. Intention gives an act its moral and devotional meaning and connects its outward form to what it builds within a person—yet it neither validates a wrongful means nor cancels a binding right. The Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, is reported to have said: "*Deeds are judged by intentions, and each person will have what they intended*" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 1).

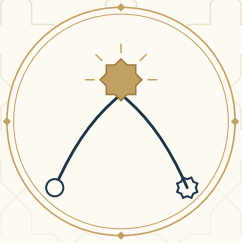
Freedom of belief and responsibility of choice. Faith does not rest on compulsion, but on clear guidance, inquiry, and free response: *"There is no compulsion in religion; the right course has become distinct from error"* (Q 2:256). This freedom does not cancel a person's responsibility to seek the truth or their responsibility for what they choose once the proof has been established.

Faith in the messengers and the messages. Muslims believe that all the prophets called to the oneness of God and to the guidance of humankind; they revere them and make no distinction among them in the fundamental affirmation that they are God's messengers: *"We make no distinction between any of his messengers"* (Q 2:285). Islam is distinguished by the sealing of the message with the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, and by the preservation of the Qur'an as the final Book.



PART TWO

THE ISLAMIC CREED



PART TWO

How Do We Find Our Way to the Truth?

"Have they not journeyed through the land, so that they might have hearts with which to reason or ears with which to hear? It is not the eyes that go blind, but the hearts within the breasts that go blind"

(Q 22:46).

Intellect and Revelation in the Search for Truth

Any school of thought can offer a beautiful message about life; yet the beauty of a phrase is not enough on its own. The deeper question is: from what conception of existence and of the human being does this message spring? Does it cohere with what a person actually believes, or does it remain a set of words unsupported by a coherent vision? This is where the Islamic creed begins: it is the root that gives life its meaning and directs conduct and stance.

The Islamic creed inquires into the source of existence, the human being's relation to their Creator, the purpose of life, the regularities that govern movement within it, what lies beyond

death, and the role of revelation in guiding the human being. These are not theoretical preliminaries remote from reality: the answers shape our daily choices and our understanding of success, goodness, and responsibility.

Domains and Limits of Knowledge

Striving to know the truth and worshipping God with insight are among the foundations of the Islamic intellectual framework. For this reason, Islam has honoured the intellect and called people to read, reflect, and seek wisdom—and the first word of the Qur'an to be sent down was: "*Read*" (Q 96:1).

God teaches us in his wise Book that the task of the prophets is to teach people and to purify them: "*As We sent among you a Messenger from among yourselves, reciting Our signs to you, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you did not know*" (Q 2:151).

Two circles of truth can be distinguished according to the path by which the human being comes to know them.

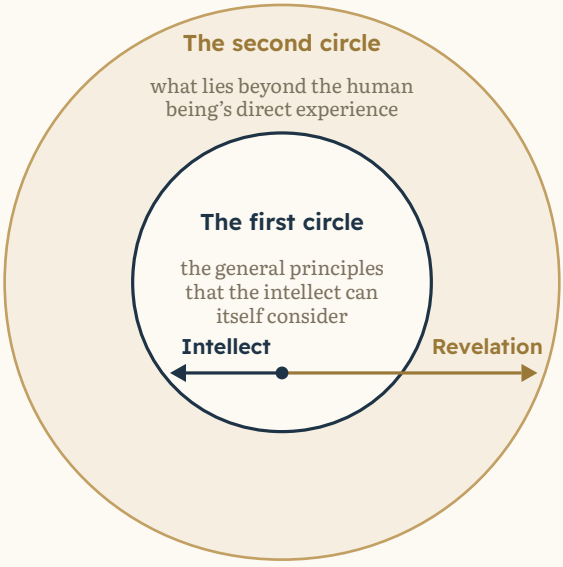
The first circle comprises the general principles that the intellect can itself consider: the way existence points to its Creator, the need for guidance, the possibility of prophethood, and some of the great moral principles. In this circle the messengers do not suspend the intellect; they awaken it and set the signs before it—which is why the command to reflect and inquire recurs in the Qur'an: "*Say: I exhort you to one thing only—that you rise up for God, in pairs and singly, and then reflect*" (Q 34:46).

Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Contemplation of the dominion of the heavens and the earth is the worship of the sincere*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa-Durar al-Kalim, no. 1792).

The second circle concerns what lies beyond the human being's direct experience: the details of the unseen, the return

to God, and many of the bounds of the revealed law. Here the intellect recognises its need for revelation, for on its own it has no encompassing knowledge of worlds it has not witnessed, nor of all the effects of an act in this world and the hereafter.

This does not separate rulings from wisdom or exempt the human being from questioning and seeking understanding; it places the question within its proper limits. Reason may find its way to some of the wisdom and benefits that underlie a ruling, without claiming to encompass all that it rests upon or all that follows from it.



Here the intellect recognises its need for revelation

Two circles of truth can be distinguished according to the path by which the human being comes to know them

Thus the intellect does not stand against revelation. Through the intellect we examine the truthfulness of the message, understand the texts, and weigh their indications; through revelation we receive what human experience cannot grasp on its

own. God, exalted is he, says: *"We do not punish until We have sent a messenger"* (Q 17:15).

For this reason, the creed may not be built upon every extraordinary occurrence, nor may fascination with an obscure phenomenon become a substitute for inquiry and verification. A miracle is a sign that God brings about in support of his messengers, whereas undisciplined claims may open the door to deception and exploitation. Reason here is a guardian of faith, not its adversary.

The Qur'an presents an example of people demanding wonders out of obstinacy, when what they seek is not knowledge of the truth but the imposition of one condition after another upon the Messenger. The Qur'an returns the human being to the reality of the message and to the responsibility to inquire—not to the pursuit of astonishment for its own sake: *"Say: Glory be to my Lord! Am I anything but a human being, a messenger?"* (Q 17:93).

PART TWO

God, Exalted in Majesty

"God is the Light of the heavens and the earth"
(Q 24:35).

The Islamic creed centres upon the unalloyed oneness of God, exalted in majesty: from him is the origin, and to him the return: *"Indeed we belong to God, and to him we shall return"* (Q 2:156). God is the Creator of all things, utterly self-sufficient and free of need for anything besides himself, and exalted above limit, deficiency, and likeness. Islamic wisdom—especially Transcendent Philosophy (al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya)—expresses aspects of this root through the terms *"the Necessary Existent"*[1] and *"pure existence"*[2]. These are philosophical formulations intended to aid understanding; they are not the only language in which divine unity may be expressed (see Ṣadr al-Muta'allihīn, al-Ḥikma al-Muta'āliya fī al-Asfār al-'Aqliyya al-Arba'a, vol. 1, the first journey).

1 Wājib al-wujūd, the Necessary Existent: that whose existence is not derived from another.

2 Ṣirf al-wujūd, pure existence: a philosophical expression of transcendence above limit and composition, as defined in the text.

To explain: when an existent bears an accidental attribute, we ask after its source; but what is inseparable from a thing's very reality calls for no ground separate from it. If you find a piece of iron that is hot, you ask where its heat came from; but you do not ask why a body occupies space—extension belongs to the very nature of being a body.



The Islamic creed centres upon the unalloyed oneness of God, exalted in majesty: from him is the origin, and to him the return

The existence of contingent beings is not necessary in itself: they stand in need at the very root of their existence and continuance. Reflecting on this need leads to the Necessary Existent, whose existence is not drawn from another and requires no cause.

God is the Necessary Existent: he does not exist in the manner of limited, contingent beings. The sages describe his bestowal of existence as emanation and illustrate it through the image of light proceeding from the sun—while the image

necessarily falls short of the Creator's reality: *"O people, you are the ones in need of God; and God—he is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy"* (Q 35:15).

Put differently, the sages distinguish, in a contingent existent, between its quiddity[3] and its existence: being human answers the question "*What are you*?"; existence in the external world answers the question "*Do you exist*?" This is a distinction drawn by the intellect, not a separation between two things standing independently in the external world.

Such is the case with contingent existents. As for God, exalted in majesty, he is not composed of a dependent quiddity and an existence added to it, nor does he need anything to grant him existence.

Because the Necessary Existent needs nothing else, no deficiency or restriction can limit him. Every limit discloses some aspect of need or contingency, neither of which applies to him. He is therefore absolutely unlimited—glorified is he.

Hence the sages speak of his one, simple, uncomposed, and absolute existence—unmixed with deficiency—as "*pure existence*": a philosophical term intended to affirm transcendence above limit and composition, not to add another principle of creed.

No conception, therefore, encompasses God—still less do eyes perceive him—for he has no limit or restriction that could be contained within a mental image. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, said: "*Praise belongs to God … whom the loftiest aspirations cannot reach, nor the deepest insights fathom; whose attribute has no delimited bound and no fixed description*" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1).

This shows that God bears the attributes of perfection and is exalted above deficiency, and that his attributes are not parts

3 Māhiyya (quiddity): what a thing is—its "whatness"—as distinct from the fact that it exists.

added to his essence: his power, his wisdom, his hearing, and his sight subsist in his one simple essence. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, said: "*And the perfection of sincerity towards him is the negation of attributes from him—for every attribute testifies that it is other than what it describes, and everything described testifies that it is other than the attribute*" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1).

From this exposition, the sages also argue for the impossibility of there being more than one Necessary Existent: plurality requires differentiation and limit, and what is limited is not the absolute Necessary Existent.

If we supposed two independent necessary existents, each would be limited by what distinguishes it from the other, and conceivable through its limits; each would therefore be a limited contingent being, not the Necessary Existent whom nothing limits.

Nor do creatures limit God, exalted in majesty: they subsist through him and need him, and what depends upon him cannot limit his existence.

The Qur'an and the hadiths affirm that no place limits God and that all existents subsist through him at every moment. We truly exist as creatures, sustained by God's giving, and the traces of his power appear in our existence. The sages illustrate this with the example of light, which is an effect of the sun without being the sun itself: "*To God belong the east and the west; wherever you turn, there is the Face of God*" (Q 2:115).

To make the idea more concrete, consider the relation between you and a mental image of a beautiful scene. You bring the image into being in your mind. It has a reality at its own level, yet it subsists through you and has no independence from you.

Observe how weak the existence of this image is beside your own: it remains at your disposal, appearing when you summon

it and vanishing when you turn your mind away, with no independent continuity of its own.

Although no analogy can encompass the difference, this mental image helps illustrate our dependence on God: we are real existents, yet every aspect of our existence subsists through him, and we remain wholly within his possession. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, said of God: "*Within things, not as one thing is within another; and outside things, not as one thing is outside another—glory be to him who is so, while none besides him is so*" (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, Book of Divine Unity, "*He Is Known Only through Himself*").

From the creature's side, this is called ontological dependence: subsisting through God, needing him, and lacking independence, while retaining real existence and genuine agency at the creature's own level. From God's side, its counterpart is qayyūmiyya: God's self-subsistence and his upholding and preservation of his creatures in their very existence, continuance, and power, while he remains absolutely free of need for them. Qayyūmiyya is neither indwelling nor spatial location, and ontological dependence is neither psychological helplessness nor a station acquired by the human being.



PART TWO

The Human Being— A Servant Entrusted with Vicegerency on Earth: Honour and Responsibility

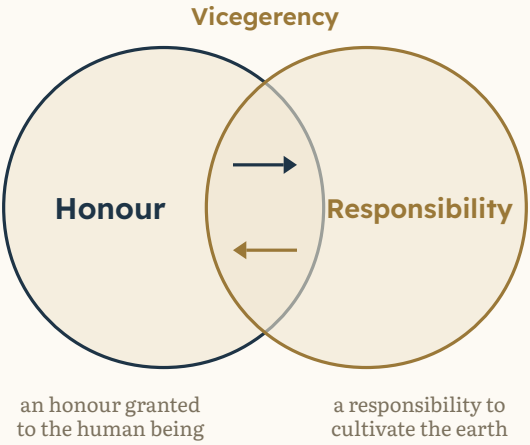
"And when your Lord said to the angels: I am creating a human being from dried clay, from dark mud moulded; when I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration"

(Q 15:28–29).

Vicegerency is a general Trust and responsibility assigned to humankind on earth; it brings honour and responsibility together. Its realisation in moral character and human perfection unfolds by degrees according to how faithfully a person embodies servanthood and justice, discharges the Trust, and cultivates the earth. Vicegerency grants no independence from God and does not make the human being the centre of existence; it places a Trust upon them within God's order and

regularities: *"And when your Lord said to the angels: I am placing a vicegerent upon the earth"* (Q 2:30).

Vicegerency on earth means embodying servanthood to God in cultivating the earth and fulfilling its rights, and bringing one's conceptions, actions, and inaction into accord with what pleases God and with the guidance of the Islamic way.



Vicegerency is a general Trust and responsibility assigned to humankind on earth; it brings honour and responsibility together

The earth is the arena in which the human being embodies servanthood to God and discharges the Trust of vicegerency—cultivating it and toiling upon it in pursuit of provision, security, and goodness within Islamic guidance. Lawful work may become an act of worship in the general sense when intention, purpose, and means are sound, rights are preserved, and no obligation is displaced; not every permitted act becomes worship automatically. Through this embodiment the self grows: *"When the prayer is concluded, disperse through the land and seek of God's bounty, and remember God often"* (Q 62:10).

As shown in the chapter 'The Strategy of Creation', creation has a clear purpose. God has made the human being's direction and Trust clear, and commanded each person to strive towards him with all the strength they have been given. The human being is a servant charged with discharging a share of the Trust within the order God has established—fleeing to him, glorified is he, racing towards nearness to him, and vying in goodness: "*So flee to God*" (Q 51:50).

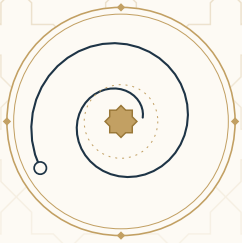
This Trust unfolds in a world of diversity and trial. God created people male and female, made them peoples and tribes so that they might come to know one another, and differentiated their capacities and provisions to test them through what he had given them. The human being is a single self whose activity in its worldly existence appears through four interwoven dimensions: the body, the heart, the intellect, and the spirit. These are neither parts nor independent substances, but dimensions through which we understand the activity of the self as a whole. God has also granted the basic freedom to choose, so that life's differences and challenges may become an arena for action, growth, and nearness to him.

For this reason, God subjected to us what in the universe assists us in discharging the Trust. He made what is on the earth an adornment and a trial, then commanded us to strive upon it and partake of his provision, so that we might realise our servanthood, discharge the Trust of vicegerency, and journey towards him: "*He is the One who made the earth manageable for you; so travel through its regions and eat of his provision. To him is the resurrection*" (Q 67:15).

Sayyid Muhammad Baqir al-Sadr presents vicegerency in Khilāfat al-Insān wa-Shahādat al-Anbiyāʾ (Human Vicegerency and the Witness of the Prophets) as both an honour granted to the human being and a responsibility to cultivate the earth—an honour inseparable from servanthood and the Trust.

In this sense, true growth occurs when the human being, while discharging the Trust of vicegerency, works within practical scope to embody justice, knowledge, mercy, and resistance to injustice, with their ontological dependence on God and servanthood to him remaining intact. Vicegerency is not realised by the scale of achievement or influence alone, but by the truthfulness of servanthood, justice, trustworthiness, and the way power is used. To the extent that a person cultivates the earth well, serves creation, and does so sincerely for God, they discharge their share of responsibility and advance along the journey towards him.





PART TWO

What Does Nearness to God Mean?

"And the foremost, the foremost—it is they who are brought near"

(Q 56:10–11).

We showed in the chapter 'The Strategy of Creation' that nearness to God is the overarching purpose that gives the human being's movement its meaning. But what does this nearness mean?

Nearness to God is not spatial, for no distance encompasses him. It describes a person's course of becoming in relation to God. Nearness or distance is understood through the interaction between the existential powers and perfections that have become actual within the self and the direction of its response to truth and servanthood—not through either dimension alone. God's qayyūmiyya and the human being's ontological dependence on him are universal realities that embrace everyone; they do not, by themselves, constitute an acquired station.

Servanthood is the consciously chosen orientation in which God is a person's Lord, highest reference, and ultimate

purpose, so that intention, obedience, and the whole of life are ordered under his good pleasure. Nearness through Servanthood is the rooting and deepening of this orientation through knowing God, loving him, directing one's intention towards him, obeying him, and surrendering to him. As it takes root, it frees a person from fear that paralyses the will, craving that drives it, attachment that veils the truth, and even enslavement to the ego itself. This does not mean that nothing affects the person; it means that nothing owns the heart or diverts it from the Lord.

The verse illustrates this meaning: *"God is the Guardian of those who believe; he brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve—their guardians are ṭāghūt, who bring them out of the light into the depths of darkness"* (Q 2:257). And God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.

The Whispered Prayer of Shaʿbān, transmitted from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, contains the words: "*My God, grant me the perfection of wholehearted turning to you*" (al-Munājāt al-Shaʿbāniyya, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl). Wholehearted Turning to God means that the heart becomes increasingly centred on him as it is freed from treating anything else as independent. People, causes, and blessings are then seen as means that subsist through God, not as sources independent of him. It joins a heart centred on God to responsible action in the world.

The aim is not to live this wholehearted turning only in solitude, but to carry it into life among people, at work, within the family, and amid life's challenges. A person engages with reality, uses the available means, and fulfils their duty while the heart remains directed towards God—so worship does not withdraw them from life, and life does not consume their worship.

Decisive moments of moral responsibility disclose how servanthood is embodied in action that preserves truth and

discharges responsibility. The rites are acts of worship in the specific sense, performed in their prescribed forms and with the intention of drawing near to God; other lawful work may become worship in the general sense when intention, purpose, and means are sound and rights are preserved.

This does not diminish prayer or fasting. Worship is first a right owed to God and obedience to him: the rite is performed with humility in its prescribed form, while truthful action may embody servanthood in another field. Every act has its own legal measure and place, and worship is not reduced to psychological or social effects.

The same meaning appears in the words of God, exalted is he: *"Your guardian is only God, and his Messenger, and those who believe—those who establish the prayer and give the alms while bowing"* (Q 5:55).

The verse brings the two together in a single scene: establishing prayer and giving alms. It illustrates how presence with God opens the heart to his creation rather than closing it to them, and how sincere worship does not isolate a person from fulfilling the rights of others.

The aim is to live this wholehearted turning while eating, drinking, sleeping, studying, working, playing with one's children, and joking with friends—so that the bond with God does not distract from life, nor life from the bond with him. Living life according to his command lies at the heart of servanthood to him.

Consider a player entering a decisive match, fully absorbed in the goal. Keeping that purpose in view does not withdraw the player from the contest; it brings focus and presence to every movement.

The purpose the player carries within does not compete with actions on the field; it orders them and focuses the player's energy, so that every movement has a reason and a direction.

Thus absorption in play does not conflict with keeping victory in view: the purpose is present in every detail without becoming an act separate from the details of the game.

With due allowance for the limits of the analogy, a heart filled with the knowledge and love of God finds in this presence an impetus to action, not withdrawal, and a source of freedom from enslavement to image and outcome, not a pretext for neglecting the means.

God wants the human being to benefit from the permitted good things of this world and to seek them in balance: *"Say: Who has forbidden the adornments God has brought forth for his servants, or the good things of provision?"* (Q 7:32), and *"so travel through its regions and eat of his provision"* (Q 67:15). The test lies in using these favours without excess and without allowing our desires for them to enslave us.

So too, God wants us to love ourselves, understand ourselves, and care for ourselves—yet without the self turning into a hidden object of worship that defines truth and goodness for us according to its caprice.

Put differently, God wants us to pass away from the claim of independence—not to lose our humanity or responsibility—so that we see ourselves as servants subsisting through him and direct our whole existence towards him: *"I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me"* (Q 51:56).

The project uses the term Universal Divine Accompaniment to describe God's sustaining relation to all creation through his knowledge, encompassment, and qayyūmiyya: no existent lies outside his knowledge or preservation. Special Divine Accompaniment refers to the care, guidance, strengthening, and victory he grants his servants according to his wisdom and promise. This special accompaniment is an act of God; it is neither a third dimension of human nearness nor a guarantee that worldly outcomes will take the form a person desires.

How, Then, Do We Understand Nearness and Distance?

To understand how a person draws nearer to or moves farther from God, the project uses the term Nearness Equation for a non-numerical relational framework. It reads nearness or distance through the interaction of two dimensions: Actualised Perfection and the direction of the response to truth and servanthood. It is neither addition nor multiplication, nor a ladder for ranking people; it is an aid to understanding the course and reviewing the self.

People do not begin from identical circumstances. What is actualised within a person and the response they are able to give are affected by body, heredity, upbringing, environment, the clarification that has reached them, and the help they have received. The extent of Actualised Perfection alone therefore does not indicate the measure of personal merit; nor does a truthful response mean that the perfections are complete.

The first dimension is Actualised Perfection: whatever has become an actual quality of the self—knowledge, understanding, will, powers, stable dispositions, and other perfections. Perfection here is wider than complete moral virtue. It includes realised strength of will, understanding, and skill, while wisdom, justice, mercy, courage, temperance, patience, truthfulness, forbearance, and generosity remain among its culminating examples. These are realities within the self whatever their proximate origin, though the share attributable to personal striving differs.

Intelligence, knowledge, and skill do not automatically belong to one category. What remains an initial capacity, stored information, or an external resource—such as wealth, office, opportunity, or bodily health—widens the field of action and remains Instrumental Expansion. Actualised understanding, settled will, and a skill that has become a stable disposition of

the self enter Actualised Perfection, while their ethical value remains dependent on direction and use.

The development of talents and skills enters the journey to God when directed towards truth, whereas the growth of wisdom, justice, mercy, and courage makes the self itself more complete. Veiling what fitra calls for, turning away from it, and entrenching injustice or ignorance distance the human being, however numerous their instruments and achievements.

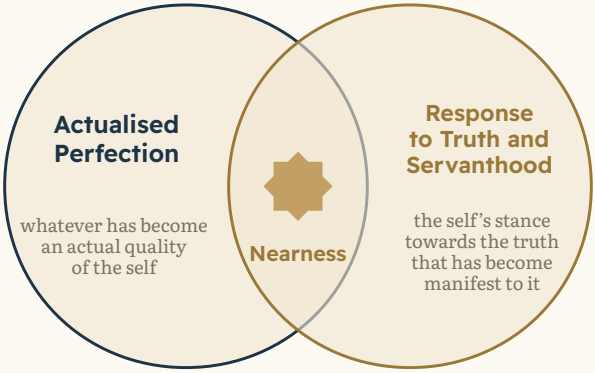
The second dimension is response to truth and servanthood. This is the self's stance towards the truth that has become manifest to it: acceptance, assent, and obedience, or turning away, rejection, and self-exaltation, according to the clarification received and practical scope. This stance appears in intention, will, choice, action, repentance, and reform. Mere ignorance, before the possibility of clarification and verification, is not in itself a negative response.

A sacred hadith[1] states: "*Nothing by which My servant draws near to Me compares with fulfilling what I have made obligatory upon him; and My servant continues to offer Me supererogatory devotions until I love him... and if he calls upon Me, I answer him, and if he asks of Me, I give to him*" (al-Ṣadūq, al-Tawḥīd, ch. 62, no. 1).

A person may respond truthfully while their Actualised Perfection remains limited because of difficult beginnings or obstacles they did not choose. Another may possess extensive powers or resources while the direction of their response is corrupted. What has become actual within the self gives the response its breadth and effect, while the response gives those qualities their direction. The fruit of obedience or the burden of refusal may therefore grow with knowledge, power, and

1 A sacred hadith (hadith qudsi): a report in which the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, relates words from God that are not part of the Qur'an.

influence—without any arithmetical relation or judgement about people's stations.



It is neither addition nor multiplication, nor a ladder for ranking people

Nearness Equation: a non-numerical relational framework. It reads nearness or distance through the interaction of two dimensions

The chapters that follow explain how this journey takes form through divine regularities, the revealed law, worship, work, and relationships. Through them, the self may grow in Actualised Perfection and its response to truth and servanthood may become more truthful, all within the reality of human toil and daily responsibility.



PART TWO

Cosmic Laws and Regularities

"Do they await anything but the way of the former peoples? You will never find any change in God's way, and you will never find any alteration in God's way" (Q 35:43).

A person's journey towards God takes shape through tazkiya and truthful servanthood while they toil upon the earth and bear the Trust of vicegerency. How is this journey ordered? Does life unfold without order, or through stable regularities that God has placed in creation? This chapter addresses these questions.

The regularity of the world raises further questions: how do we understand the disparity in qualities and conditions, the existence of harmful creatures, and the fact that the human being begins their journey in this world rather than in the abode of requital? These matters are not understood by isolating each phenomenon from the total order, but by considering the regularities, the plurality of causes, the field of choice, and the purpose of trial.

The universe unfolds according to regularities and laws—such as gravity and the relation between causes and their effects. God has measured and established these regularities; through them the world holds steady and knowledge, work, and planning become possible. God, exalted is he, says: *"You will never find any change in God's way, and you will never find any alteration in God's way"* (Q 35:43).

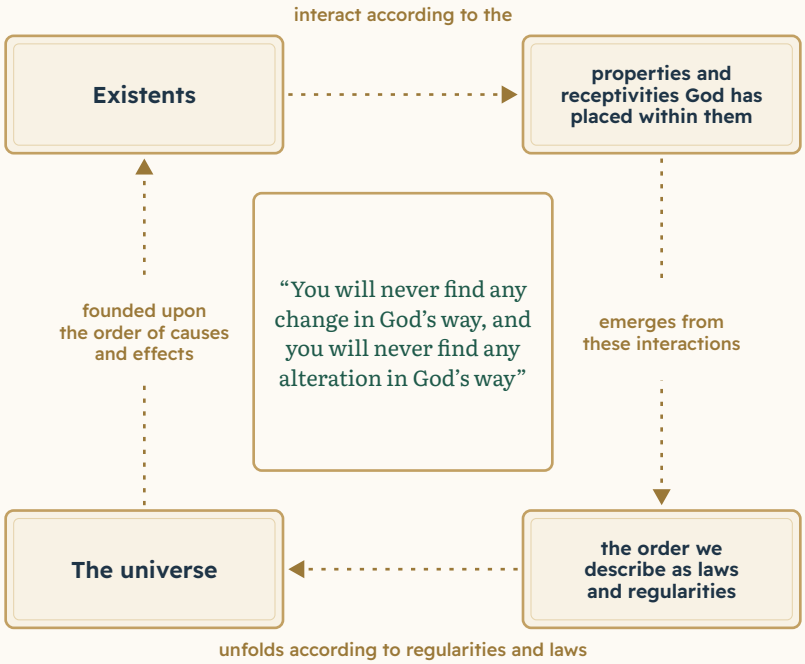
These regularities explain part of the disparity and difference in creation, and they govern many effects of our actions upon the self, society, and nature. God therefore calls us to discover and employ them—not as powers independent of him, but as the patterns through which he has ordered the world: *"He is the One who made the earth manageable for you; so travel through its regions and eat of his provision"* (Q 67:15).

These laws do not exist as entities separate from existents, imposing themselves upon them from outside; rather, we abstract them from the regularity of the relations between things and their qualities, and from the recurrence of effects in ways that can be observed and understood.

The planets, seas, living creatures, and human beings interact according to the properties and receptivities God has placed within them; the order we describe as laws and regularities emerges from these interactions.

Nor are the qualities of an existent separate from its particular existence: extension, mass, and features are not added from outside to a completed body; they belong to the very manner in which it came to exist. Differences among existents are therefore bound up with differences in their causes, levels of preparedness, and limits.

This raises a further question: how do existents acquire their particular qualities? God is the Creator of all things, yet he brings creation about through a network of causes and regularities that mediate the appearance of qualities and results.



These laws do not exist as entities separate from existents; rather, we abstract them from the regularity of the relations between things and their qualities

The multiplicity of existents and the diversity of causes do not mean that creation has departed from the unity of the divine will: God's command is one, and he has founded the world upon the order of causes and effects. *"Our command is but one, like the twinkling of an eye"* (Q 54:50), and *"Indeed, We created all things according to a measure"* (Q 54:49).

For this reason, the human being begins with hereditary and bodily properties and with differing receptivities and degrees of preparedness. Receptivity is the range of what can grow or take shape in a person; preparedness is the degree of readiness for it in a given circumstance. Among these differences are height, skin colour, and certain mental and bodily predispositions.

Moral qualities, by contrast, take shape through the interplay of temperament, body, upbringing, environment, experience, choice, and repeated action—so character is not reduced to genes, nor is responsibility annulled.

Actual Capacity is what a person can do or refrain from doing now, in the present situation. Practical scope is the domain upon which responsibility rests in the person's real circumstances, in view of knowledge, intention, ability, obstacles, and the available means they can put in place. Responsibility for earlier steps may be examined to the extent that they were known, within the person's power, and chosen; an outside observer cannot conclusively determine another person's practical scope, because its elements are not all disclosed outwardly.

Differences in proximate causes therefore affect which existent comes to be and what qualities it has. Had the ovum united with a different sperm cell, or had fertilisation involved a different ovum, another human being with different properties would have resulted.

So it is with all existents: each has proximate causes that contribute to its appearance and its qualities, and all of them work within the order God has established—not outside it, and not independently of it.

Does This Mean the Universe Operates Independently, without Needing Its Creator?

No. The universe, with all it contains, needs God at the root of its existence and in its continuance, moment after moment. The regularities do not sustain themselves, and causes do not grant themselves their efficacy: they subsist through God, and their effects occur through the efficacy he has bestowed upon them: *"O people, you are the ones in need of God; and God—he is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy"* (Q 35:15).

A proximate cause yields its effect through the efficacy God has placed within it, but it does not become an independent

source of existence. When a cause prepares a thing for a particular result, that result occurs—in the language of Islamic wisdom—within the continuous divine emanation, according to the receptivity of the recipient and its degree of preparedness.

Differences in receptivity and preparedness do not mean that God unjustly withholds good from some creatures. Rather, every existent receives from the divine giving as much as its constitution and course allow. For the human being, the door of growth and change remains open within the range of what can be chosen and done.

At its root, existence is goodness and giving, and God is generous—his giving is never exhausted. Existents nevertheless differ in preparedness, rank, and effect. In this way, the breadth of emanation is consistent with differences in what creatures receive.

The Qur'an offers an image that helps clarify this meaning: *"He sent down water from the sky, and valleys flowed, each according to its measure"* (Q 13:17). The water is one, yet each valley carries as much as its breadth allows; likewise, existents differ in receptivity without the divine giving being bounded by their limits.

But Does This Not Lead to the Existence of Evils?

Evil is not an independent existence set against God. Much of what we call evil is the absence of a perfection, a pain belonging to one part of a wider order, or the result of poor human choice and misuse of what has been given. This does not deny the reality of pain or responsibility for injustice; it prevents us from imagining evil as a self-subsisting source outside God's sovereignty.

Our judgement of things may also be narrowed by immediate benefit: a child may see medicine as evil and sweets as good because the child's view stops at immediate pleasure and pain.

The human being needs to widen this view—without denying personal suffering or making light of another person's pain.

Death is a clear example: it is a painful parting in the experience of this world, yet in the vision of faith it is neither non-existence nor an absolute evil, but a passage to another stage of the human being's journey. Acknowledging the pain of loss is thus compatible with faith that existence does not end there.

If These Laws Never Fail, Why Then Do We Call upon God?

Calling upon God is itself one of the causes God has placed within his regularities: it changes the human being, opens doors to guidance and action, and may become a means through which God brings about whatever he wills to bestow, in ways—some known to us, others not. Supplication therefore does not stand in opposition to the law; it operates within it and under God's sovereignty.

God's power is not measured by the powers of creatures, nor is it confined by the regularities he has established. He is their Creator and Sustainer, and he enacts his will through them—or in ways that lie beyond our knowledge: *"His command, when he wills a thing, is only to say to it, 'Be,' and it is"* (Q 36:82).

Supplication is also an act of worship that deepens awareness of our dependence on God and turns the heart away from reliance on means towards the One who gives them efficacy—without suspending striving or denying the responsibility to use them: *"When My servants ask you about Me, I am near; I answer the call of anyone who calls upon Me"* (Q 2:186).



PART TWO

The Course of Life

"Indeed we belong to God, and to him we shall return" (Q 2:156).

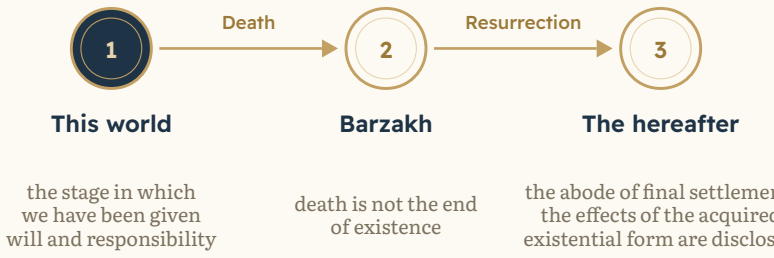
Every human being is engaged in kadh (toil) from the moment of creation: *"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"* (Q 84:6). Kadh is the existential movement inseparable from human life: through time, every person moves towards their encounter with God and final destiny before him. It does not, in itself, signify positive nearness or praiseworthy growth. What a person becomes in terms of nearness or distance is determined by what takes shape within them and by the direction of their response, according to the guidance they have received and their practical scope, while they remain dependent on God's aid.

A person's life unfolds through successive stages, each with a level of preparedness suited to it. The Qur'an illustrates this progression when it describes the creation of the human being from clay, then a drop, then a clinging clot, then a lump of flesh, until God brings the human being forth as another creation—and then mentions death and resurrection: *"Then after*

that you will surely die; then on the Day of Resurrection you will surely be raised" (Q 23:15–16).

The human being's bodily existence begins with fertilisation and the onset of embryonic formation, followed by growth in the womb until birth into this world. Each transition opens a domain of existence that could not be perceived in the preceding stage.

Through death, the human being passes to the world of barzakh[1], and through resurrection to the hereafter, the abode of final settlement. The same human person endures because God preserves them, while the mode of embodiment changes in a way suited to barzakh and the hereafter, without any claim to know how. We do not encompass the details of these stages, but revelation tells us that death is not the end of existence and that the human being encounters the effects of what the self has become and of the deeds it has performed. Responsibility is measured by knowledge, intention, choice, and practical scope.



The successive stages of life, from this world to the hereafter

However long the life of this world stretches in our reckoning, it remains short when measured against the lasting life of the hereafter: "*And this worldly life is nothing but diversion and play;*

1 Barzakh: the intermediate world between death and resurrection.

and the abode of the hereafter—it is indeed the true life, if they only knew" (Q 29:64).

How Do We Understand the Two Worlds to Come?

We can know of the barzakh and the hereafter what revelation has disclosed, but their realities pass beyond our sensory experience in this world: *"and bring you into being in what you do not know"* (Q 56:61).

To make the contrast clearer, consider the difference between the embryo in the womb and the human being after birth: the embryo cannot comprehend the world into which it will emerge, even though that world is already present within the order of its existence.

And this world—with its heavens, earth, and galaxies—is immeasurably wider than anything the embryo can perceive. Yet this world itself remains a limited stage compared with what God has revealed about the barzakh and the hereafter.

This does not mean that we can establish an arithmetical ratio between the worlds. The comparison is meant to open the mind to the vastness of what we do not know, not to describe its reality or gauge it by worldly standards.

The world to come is not a larger copy of our material world. Nor may its time and place be described by worldly measures without evidence. The examples are therefore illustrative only; true knowledge of these realities belongs to God.

The Disclosure of Happiness and Misery

In the hereafter, the effects of what the project calls "the acquired existential form" are disclosed: that is, the self as it has come to be through its knowledge, loves, intentions, stable dispositions, direction, perfections, and deficiencies. Calling it "acquired" does not mean that the human being chose all its

causes or morally deserves everything that took shape within; responsibility is measured by knowledge, intention, choice, and practical scope. Nearness or distance becomes more intensely present in its experience. The Qur'an speaks of deeds being present in the words: *"and they will find all they have done present before them"* (Q 18:49).

For this reason, the pleasure and pain of the hereafter are not merely quantitative extensions of what we know in this world. They belong to a wider stage in which the person's true condition becomes more fully manifest to them and the consequences of their course are revealed.

In this world, many people tie their sense of happiness to things outside themselves—wealth, children, or prestige. In the two worlds that follow, a deeper connection becomes apparent between a person's state and what they have become in qualities and direction: what has been actualised within the self and the truthfulness of the response to truth.

We had no choice in the origin of our existence or in many of our beginnings. This world, however, is the stage in which we have been given will and responsibility. Within the power God has granted, we may participate in shaping the existential form with which we meet the hereafter. God's creation, guidance, aid, and enabling grace precede and sustain this participation; it is never independent of him. This does not mean that we chose all the causes that affected us. Through our choices and deeds, rather, we prepare what we carry into the world to come: *"and as for the one who feared standing before his Lord and restrained the self from caprice, the Garden is the refuge"* (Q 79:40–41).

When this world is measured against the hereafter, it appears short and passing, however long a person's life in it. The point is not to annul the value of worldly time, but to grasp that its value lies in its effect on the more lasting journey.

A limited pleasure should therefore not become the final end for which we sacrifice truth, dignity, and destiny. Pleasure is legitimate in its proper place, but it cannot, by itself, bear the meaning of life.

Nor should a passing pain drive us to abandon what we know to be true, or to despair of God's mercy. The pain is real; but the existence of the hereafter sets it within a horizon wider than the moment in which it fills our awareness.

Wisdom is to weigh the immediate against the deferred: to live in this world in earnest, enjoy its good things within the bounds of truth, and ward off its pains by legitimate means—without selling a lasting life for a passing pleasure or a temporary fear.





PART TWO

Otherworldly Recompense

"On the Day every self finds all the good it has done brought before it—and all the evil it has done—it will wish that a great distance lay between itself and that evil"

(Q 3:30).

We pass into the two worlds to come as the same persons, with our identities preserved. Knowledge, loves, intentions, deeds, and stable dispositions all enter into what the self becomes. God's creation, guidance, aid, and enabling grace precede and sustain this becoming; it is never independent of him. "Acquired" does not mean that a person chose everything that affected them or morally deserves all of it. Responsibility is measured by knowledge, intention, choice, and practical scope. In the hereafter, God makes the realities and effects of deeds manifest, under his judgement, in forms suited to that mode of existence: *"and they will find all they have done present before them; and your Lord wrongs no one"* (Q 18:49). This manifestation does not exhaust the meaning of reward and punishment or close the doors of forgiveness, intercession, and divine bounty.

The matter resembles a quality whose effects remain limited while a person is in one environment, then become manifest when they enter another environment with different laws and demands. The effects of what takes shape within the self and what proceeds from it may not all be apparent now; passage to another world uncovers what was hidden: *"You were heedless of this; now We have removed your covering, and today your sight is sharp"* (Q 50:22).

One way al-Mīzān interprets these verses is that recompense in the hereafter is not an arbitrary matter externally attached to the deed: the deed is preserved in its effect upon the self and is made manifest by God when the innermost secrets are tried. See the commentary on *"On the Day every self finds all the good it has done brought before it"* (Q 3:30), and *"You are only requited for what you used to do"* (Q 66:7), in al-Mīzān.

And What of Death?

Death is hard for the human being because it entails parting and passage to a world not experienced through the senses; yet its hardship does not mean that it is itself a punishment. It is a door to another stage, and a person's state after it differs according to what the self has become and according to God's mercy and justice.

When the Qur'an describes the taking of believers' souls, it says: *"those whom the angels take while they are in a state of goodness, saying: Peace be upon you. Enter the Garden for what you used to do"* (Q 16:32). Of the taking of unbelievers' souls, it says: *"If you could but see when the angels take those who disbelieved, striking their faces and their backs: Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire"* (Q 8:50).

Imam al-Sajjād, peace be upon him, is reported to have likened death for the believer to leaving a tight garment and heavy fetters for finer clothing and a more welcoming dwelling,

while the state of one who has turned away from God is the reverse (al-Ṣadūq, Maʿānī al-Akhbār, the chapter on the meaning of death). The point is that death opens into a stage in which the reality of what the self has become is disclosed.

Will Unbelievers Enter the Fire?

The religion God has chosen for humankind as their path towards him is Islam, the final revealed law. God, exalted is he, says: *"Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam, it will never be accepted from him, and in the hereafter he will be among the losers"* (Q 3:85).

Shaykh Murtada Muṭahharī distinguishes, in al-ʿAdl al-Ilāhī (Divine Justice), between someone who recognises the truth and then denies it out of obstinacy, and the intellectually disadvantaged (al-mustaḍʿaf al-fikrī)—that is, a person whom the proof has not reached, or who has no realistic means of knowing and verifying it. Here the term describes a lack of fair access to the truth, not low intelligence or cognitive disability. Such a person has neither been obstinate nor neglected a path of inquiry that lay within their practical scope. Responsibility is measured not by name or affiliation alone, but by the clarification that has reached a person, their practical scope, and their stance towards the truth.

Such a person may display what the project calls "General Fitra-Based Response to Truth": a truthful orientation towards truth, goodness, and perfection that leads them to accept what becomes clear according to their understanding and practical scope. This does not ascribe to them an explicit religious servanthood of which they were never aware. This description alone does not warrant a judgement of salvation or station; any such judgement remains within the breadth of God's justice, mercy, and knowledge of his servants: *"We do not punish until We have sent a messenger"* (Q 17:15).

"Those whom the angels take while they are wronging themselves—they will say: In what state were you? They will say: We were disempowered in the land. They will say: Was God's earth not spacious, that you might have emigrated in it? For those, their refuge is Hell—an evil destination; except the disempowered among the men, women, and children who can devise no stratagem and are guided to no way—for those, it may be that God will pardon them, for God is ever Pardoning, Forgiving" (Q 4:97–99).

Sayyid al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains in al-Mīzān, in his commentary on verses 97–99 of Surat al-Nisāʾ, that being disadvantaged is not confined to outward material inability. A person may be intellectually disadvantaged—unable, because circumstances have overwhelmed their awareness, to find the way to truth—without being obstinate or arrogant. Had the truth become clear to them, they would have followed it.

Such a person is not placed on the same level as one who knew and then denied: responsibility attaches to the clarification that reached them and to what lay within practical scope. Final judgement belongs to God—the Just and Merciful, who knows the human being's inward state and circumstances.

How Do We Understand the Bliss of the Garden?

When we read descriptions of the Garden, we may stop at images of palaces, gardens, rivers, and other forms of sensory bliss, and imagine that life there is simply a static material repetition of this world. But the Qur'an uses these images to give us an intelligible glimpse of what lies beyond our experience; it does not confine the bliss of the hereafter to them.

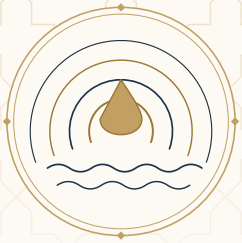
Would eternal life be a merely monotonous extension of material enjoyment? That would be inconsistent both with the knowledge, will, and love the human being has cultivated in this world and with the words of God, exalted is he: *"God's good pleasure is greater still"* (Q 9:72).

Whatever has become actual within the self—knowledge, love, virtues, direction, and response to truth—is not lost in the hereafter. It shapes the way the self receives bliss, nearness, and good pleasure, while the bounty remains God's and final judgement belongs to him. People's ranks therefore differ, and each person receives good through God's mercy and according to what the self has been prepared to receive.

What the Qur'an mentions of the bliss of the Garden is part of what the human being can understand within human language and experience; its reality is wider than conception. *"There they will have whatever they wish, and with Us is yet more"* (Q 50:35), and *"No self knows what joy has been kept hidden for them—a delight to the eyes"* (Q 32:17).

This world is a real stage of the human being's journey, not an illusion or a game without effect; but it is limited—neither the final reality nor the dwelling-place of settlement. The hereafter is the wider life in which the realities of deeds and the ranks of nearness are disclosed: *"And the abode of the hereafter—it is indeed the true life, if they only knew"* (Q 29:64).

The Garden, therefore, is not to be understood as a static or tedious life, but as a world in which forms of nearness, good pleasure, knowledge, and bliss open before the human being—forms that our descriptions cannot encompass. Its people do not wish to turn away from it, for it accords with the purity they have attained and the goodness they have been prepared to receive. God's bounty remains wider than all they conceive: a giving never cut off—*"There they will have whatever they wish, and with Us is yet more"* (Q 50:35).



PART TWO

Divine Gracious Care and Mercy

"In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the Ever-Merciful" (Q 1:1).

Divine Gracious Care in This World

God extends gracious care to his servants: he opens paths that help them obey him and turn away from disobedience, without stripping them of choice. God, exalted is he, said: "*Does the human being suppose that he will be left aimless?*" (Q 75:36), and: "*Had God spread out provision for his servants, they would have transgressed in the earth; but he sends down in measure what he wills*" (Q 42:27).

Part of God's gracious care is that he grants guidance through clarification and enablement before holding the human being responsible: he gives the human being a fitra containing a general, undifferentiated ground of truth known by presence, an original love of absolute perfection, and an orientation to servanthood; he gives intellect, clarification, the

possibility of learning, and capacity, and opens the way of response in differing degrees. Fitra is not ready-made detailed knowledge or completed religious awareness; its appearance and the identification of its object therefore require revelation, the intellect, and tazkiya. Kadh unfolds within life itself: *"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"* (Q 84:6).

The Qur'an connects this original ground with the religion that inclines to truth: *"So set your face towards the religion, inclining to truth—the fitra of God upon which he originated people. There is no changing God's creation. That is the upright religion, but most people do not know"* (Q 30:30). This is followed by the command to turn to him, be mindful of him, establish prayer, and abandon the association of partners with him (Q 30:31). In this context, fitra is not separate from responding to God.

Here we can understand its relationship to the covenant of lordship: *"And when your Lord took from the children of Adam, from their loins, their descendants, and made them bear witness concerning themselves: 'Am I not your Lord?' They said: 'Yes, we bear witness'—lest you say on the Day of Resurrection: 'We were heedless of this'"* (Q 7:172). The context then mentions the excuse of following one's forefathers in associating partners with God, and concludes: *"Thus We set out the signs in detail, so that they may return"* (Q 7:174). This witnessing is connected with knowledge of the Lord, with the proof, and with the call to return.

The Islamic Theory of Origination reads this relationship as follows: fitra is an original ground in the human being's creation, while the covenant is a witnessing to God's lordship. Their shared content is divine unity, without the two terms becoming synonyms. This is supported by the words of Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, in explaining fitra: "*It is Islam. God originated them upon it when he took their covenant concerning*

divine unity. He said: 'Am I not your Lord?' Both the believer and the unbeliever are included in it." This does not mean that a person is born knowing all the rulings of religion or responding to them fully. The person needs clarification, learning, and tazkiya, and responsibility remains measured by what has reached them and by their practical scope. Commentators have differed in their understanding of how this witnessing took place; the connection drawn here does not depend on settling that question (al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, "The Fitra of Creation upon Divine Unity", no. 2; *al-Mīzān*, vol. 8, commentary on Q 7:172–174; *al-Amthal*, commentary on the same verses).

The human being is accompanied in this kadh by God's aid: his help, guidance, strengthening, preparation of causes, and opening of paths to fruition. This aid precedes human striving, accompanies it, and reaches beyond it, without cancelling human action or the regularities and without guaranteeing the particular outcome a person desires. Its effects are seen in the opportunities for good opened in study, work, family, and service, and in awakening fitra and enabling inquiry and return, while striving and choice remain.

God subjected to the human being what in the universe assists in discharging the Trust and journeying towards him—not to make the human being superior to all existence, but to entrust them with a wider responsibility towards God's favour and creation: "*He subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, all together, from him*" (Q 45:13).

God's honouring of the human being includes his command to the angels to prostrate before Adam, peace be upon him—a prostration in obedience to God and an honouring of the receptivity to bear the Trust that he placed within the human being. This honour is inseparable from the warning against pride: Iblis refused and was among the unbelievers.

God legislated Islam as guidance for the human being and made faith beloved to hearts, so that it might nurture the values he loves—truthfulness, mercy, and justice. God has promised guidance to those who strive sincerely in his way, while all bounty comes from God and the forms and outcomes of aid remain subject to his wisdom: *"And those who strive for Our sake —We will surely guide them to Our ways"* (Q 29:69).

Divine Mercy in the Hereafter

Together with God's gracious care in this world, his mercy and justice are manifested in the order of recompense: he does not place the obstinate and those genuinely unable on the same level, nor call a person to account except for what the proof has established against them and what proceeded from them knowingly and intentionally, within practical scope. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says in the Supplication of Kumayl: "*Had you not decreed the punishment of those who deny you... you would have made the Fire, all of it, coolness and peace*" (al-Ṭūsī, Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, the Supplication of Kumayl).

A permitted act may become an act of worship in the general sense when intention, purpose, and means are sound, rights are preserved, and no obligation is displaced. Everyday activities then acquire devotional value when a person seeks through them the Face of God. A permitted act does not automatically become a rite, and intention validates neither an unlawful means nor an unlawful purpose.

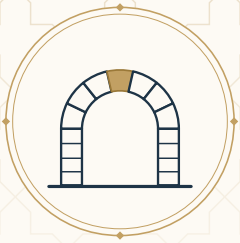
An evil thought that passes through the heart unbidden is not held against the human being until it is resolved upon and translated into word or deed, whereas God records a reward for a good intention even when inability prevents completion of the deed.

God has also made a good deed count tenfold, while an evil deed is requited only with its like: *"Whoever brings a good deed*

shall have ten like it; and whoever brings an evil deed shall be requited only with its like" (Q 6:160). He has opened doors to the forgiveness of evil deeds and the erasure of their effects. Foremost among these is sincere repentance; other means include righteous works such as charity and maintaining the bonds of kinship. Through sincere repentance, he may even change evil deeds into good ones: *"for those, God will change their evil deeds into good deeds"* (Q 25:70).

Among the doors of mercy is intercession, by God's leave. It is a bond with goodness and its symbols, not an overstepping of his justice. Texts speak of the intercession of the Qur'an, the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, and the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them—so that devoted allegiance remains bound to guidance and righteous action rather than becoming a reliance that suspends repentance and responsibility.

Before all of these stands the door of forgiveness and pardon: *"Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of God's mercy. God forgives all sins; he is the Forgiving, the Merciful"* (Q 39:53).



PART TWO

The Islamic Revealed Law

"Then We set you upon a revealed law concerning the matter; follow it, and do not follow the whims of those who do not know"

(Q 45:18).

Why the Islamic Revealed Law?

A person's conduct does not issue from a passing decision alone: thoughts, intentions, habits, and repeated deeds gather over time until they form a configuration through which the person sees and responds to things. This is part of what the Qur'an indicates through the concept of shakila: *"Say: Each acts according to their shakila"* (Q 17:84).

Shakila takes shape through the interaction of a person's knowledge, conceptions, loves, intentions, inclinations, habits, and stable dispositions, together with the effects of temperament, body, upbringing, environment, experience, and choices that have become established within the self. It makes certain patterns of perception, response, and action more likely without compelling the person. Knowing the truth is therefore

not enough unless that knowledge is put into practice in ways that form the human being and preserve direction.

For this reason, the Qur'an links the human being's true success to the tazkiya of the self: "The one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed" (Q 91:9–10). Tazkiya is the process of cleansing the self of veils and vices, developing its powers and perfections, and redirecting it towards truth and servanthood through God's guidance and aid.

This is the role of the Islamic revealed law: it is a system of guidance that contributes to human becoming, preserves direction towards God, and joins what a person believes to what they do. It does not address the human being only at the moment of worship; it orders the relationship with God, the self, other people, wealth, and work.

In this vision, the human being is a free and responsible agent whose self takes shape through the interaction of what they were given, what befell them, and what they knew, loved, intended, chose, and did. Through the will, a person participates in shaping their own shakila. The revealed law is not a psychological technique but a form of divine guidance that awakens intellect and heart, refines desire, trains the will, and opens the doors of mercy, justice, and giving.

This does not mean neglecting the effect of habit and repetition. Regular practice helps root goodness and strengthen self-restraint. God, exalted is he, says: "*The human being was indeed created fretful: impatient when harm touches him, withholding when good touches him—except those who pray, those who are constant in their prayer*" (Q 70:19–23). In the commentaries *al-Mīzān* and *al-Amthal*, fretfulness is connected with an intense craving for what a person sees as good for themselves. The original pursuit of good is open to refinement, but the domination of craving may drive a person to impatience in adversity and to

withholding when good is received. The point is not to condemn the human being's original constitution or to annul human needs (*al-Mīzān*, vol. 20, and *al-Amthal*, commentaries on Q 70:19–35).

The description of those excepted does not stop at prayer. It also includes giving, belief in the Day of Judgement, fearful concern, chastity, safeguarding trusts, bearing testimony, and guarding prayer, through to verse 35. Their qualities are described in these words: *"and those who are mindful of their trusts and their pledge"* (Q 70:32). Faithfulness is therefore present on this path, without every pledge here being confined to the covenant in Surat al-Aʿrāf. Their description as *"those who are fearful of their Lord's punishment"* (Q 70:27) also prevents the exception from being understood as the removal of every fear.

The framework reads this context as an account of the way worship and truthful action refine response: prayer that a person faithfully maintains, giving that resists avarice, and trustworthiness borne out in dealings with others. Constancy may help these qualities take root, but their outward form alone does not guarantee this. Habit remains a servant of tazkiya, not an independent basis for defining the revealed law, nor a condition upon which the obligation to worship depends.

The purpose is to direct one's kadh consciously towards God: to set one's direction right, undertake the tazkiya of the self, and exercise freedom in responding to God, so that guidance is reflected in individual and social life: *"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"* (Q 84:6).

What Is the Islamic Revealed Law?

The Islamic revealed law is an integrated system of acts of worship, ethics, and rulings through which God guides the human being, orders a person's striving in life, preserves a person's

direction towards him, and helps set the self and society right: *"Indeed, the religion in God's sight is Islam"* (Q 3:19).

God has been pleased with it as a way that takes account of human fitra and the human constitution, and makes belief, worship, ethics, and work one movement on the path of servanthood: *"Today I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favour upon you, and been pleased with Islam as your religion"* (Q 5:3).

Through its acts of worship, ethical disciplines, and rulings, this system strengthens the will, refines the self, cultivates discipline, and embeds justice and mercy in relationships. Daily practice thus becomes part of human becoming and the journey towards God, while tranquillity and happiness remain fruits of guidance and uprightness rather than definitions of the revealed law.

Among the principles that preserve the revealed law's capacity to respond to changing conditions are ijtihad[1]; the lifting of hardship; consideration of ability; and recourse to the universal maxims in newly arising cases. Thus its guidance remains present as the forms of life change.

In the Imami vision of legal theory, rulings are bound to real benefits and harms in actions and human life that God knows, even when we do not encompass all their details. The rank of a ruling is known from its evidence in the revealed law and the rules of derivation—not from an individual estimation detached from revelation.

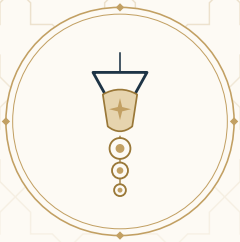
God charges his servants only after the proof has been established, and lays upon them nothing beyond their power: *"We do not punish until We have sent a messenger"* (Q 17:15), and *"God does not burden any self beyond its capacity"* (Q 2:286).

1 Ijtihād: disciplined juristic effort to derive rulings from their recognised sources.

Sources of the Islamic Revealed Law

God set out the roots of the revealed law in his Book, and made it guidance, mercy, and the highest reference for the Muslims: *"And We have sent down to you the Book as a clarification of all things, and as guidance, mercy, and glad tidings for the Muslims"* (Q 16:89).

In the Imami reading, the Qur'an is not read apart from the exposition of the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, or from the exposition of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, whom he identified to the community as an extension of his guidance. The hadith of the two weighty things (al-thaqalayn) joined the Book of God and the Prophet's kindred, calling Muslims to hold fast to both: *"I am leaving among you that which, if you hold fast to it, you will never go astray after me... the Book of God... and my kindred, the People of my House; and they will not part until they return to me at the Pool"* (Sunan al-Tirmidhī, no. 3788).



PART TWO

Prophethood

"A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering weighs heavily upon him; he is deeply concerned for you, and tender and merciful towards the believers"

(Q 9:128).

Prophethood is among the greatest manifestations of divine gracious care towards the human being: God chooses from among his servants one who carries his message to people, guides them to what brings well-being in this world and the next, teaches them the Book and wisdom, purifies them, and sets before them a living model of servanthood. *"As We sent among you a Messenger from among yourselves, reciting Our signs to you, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom"* (Q 2:151).

This function is connected with what has already been said about fitra and the covenant. The messengers remind the human being of the Lord, teach what the person does not know, and make clear how to fulfil the obligations of servanthood. In the first sermon of *Nahj al-Balāgha*, in the account of the

sending of the prophets, we read: "*When most of his creation altered the pledge God had laid upon them, they failed to recognise his due and set up rivals beside him. The devils diverted them from knowledge of him and cut them off from his worship. He then sent his messengers among them and brought his prophets to them in succession, to call upon them to fulfil the covenant of his fitra, remind them of his forgotten favour, establish the proof against them by conveying the message, and stir for them the buried treasures of the intellects.*" (*Nahj al-Balāgha*, Sermon 1).

"*To call upon them to fulfil*" means to ask them to discharge what this covenant requires. Returning to fitra is therefore not a matter of resting content with what we feel; it is a response to guidance made clear by revelation, understood by the intellect, and expressed in worship and action. Reminding people does not replace teaching them, just as the existence of an original ground in fitra does not mean that detailed clarification has reached all people in the same way.

The prophetic office requires qualities that fit its bearer to receive and convey revelation and to discharge the Trust: truthfulness, trustworthiness, wisdom, patience, courage, sound management of affairs, and excellence of character. People cannot place confidence in a message contradicted by its bearer's life, nor is the proof established through one who cannot be trusted with what is conveyed: *"God chooses messengers from among the angels and from among humankind"* (Q 22:75).

This is the basis for the doctrine of ʿiṣma[1]: God safeguards the prophets from sin and error in bearing and delivering the message and preserves their lives from anything that would destroy trust in them or contradict their exemplary station. ʿIṣma does not abolish their humanity; it is a perfection of awareness and choice, accompanied by divine support.

1 ʿIṣma: God's safeguarding of the prophets from sin and error in bearing and delivering the message.

In the Imami vision, this divine safeguarding extends throughout the prophets' lives, before and after their mission, preserving the integrity of the prophetic example and the unity of message and life. This is argued from the texts and from the requirements of divine selection and faithful transmission: *"Your companion has not strayed, nor has he erred; nor does he speak from caprice: it is nothing but a revelation revealed"* (Q 53:2–4).

When the apparent sense of a verse or report seems to conflict with this principle, we return to context, contextual indicators, and the principles of textual interpretation; we do not base a judgement on words taken out of context. Reports are likewise checked against the Qur'an and firmly established principles: no report is accepted that ascribes to a prophet what destroys the station of the message or contradicts what is firmly established of prophetic perfection.

The Prophet Muhammad ibn Abdullah

Muhammad ibn Abdullah, peace be upon him and his family, is the Seal of the Prophets, the master and best of the messengers, and the bearer of the final Islamic message. In him mercy, truthfulness, trustworthiness, and perfection of character were manifested. God made him an example for believers and bound following him to love of God: *"Truly in the Messenger of God you have a beautiful example"* (Q 33:21), and *"And truly you are of a tremendous character"* (Q 68:4).



PART TWO

Why Affliction?

"We will surely try you until We know those of you who strive and those who are patient, and We will try your records"

(Q 47:31).

Affliction is one of the manifestations of divine gracious care. God guides the human being through the revealed law and also nurtures them through the hardship and ease they encounter and the choices they make within the order of life. Pain is not sought for its own sake; not every pain is a direct punishment or a sign of spiritual station; nor may a person assign a specific wisdom to a particular event without evidence, for affliction unfolds within a web of causes. In a world of freedom, trial is an arena in which truthfulness is disclosed and action acquires meaning: *"Do people suppose they will be left to say, 'We believe,' and not be tried?"* (Q 29:2).

Pain and pleasure, and the way we respond to them, may teach us, foster patience and mercy, inspire work and creativity, and move us to set right what we can. Yet such fruit does not arise automatically. An experience may bring a person nearer

when met with awareness and goodness, or harden them when they respond badly.

Adversities may invite us to take refuge in God, and favours open the door to thankfulness, so that our awareness of our servanthood and dependence on him deepens when we respond. Thus trial may join the growth of certain perfections with the renewal of the bond with God, without hardship being the only path to return.

The Qur'an speaks of the lesser punishment in a more specific context: *"We will surely make them taste some of the lesser punishment before the greater punishment, so that they may return"* (Q 32:21). Al-Mīzān interprets the lesser punishment as the nearer, worldly punishment, and takes the possibility of return as an indication that it is neither annihilating punishment nor punishment in the hereafter. *Al-Amthal* reads the context in terms of disciplinary punishments and a call to return. Return is thus an explicit purpose in the verse, not a guaranteed outcome for everyone who tastes punishment. Nor does this context make every pain a punishment or every person who suffers someone who has turned away from God (*al-Mīzān*, vol. 16, commentary on Q 32:21; *al-Amthal*, commentary on Q 32:21–22).

Some constriction may arise from a person's very way of living: they turn away from God's guidance and become dominated by attachment to what they look to for security, only to grow more fearful and more grasping. This meaning will be explained in the chapter 'Remembering God Often'. The Islamic Theory of Origination proposes that some of this constriction may be understood as a form of the lesser punishment that opens the door to return. This is a proposed interpretive synthesis of the texts, not an explicit designation of this constriction in the verse from Surat al-Sajda or in the commentators' explanation of it (see *al-Mīzān*, commentaries on Q 20:123–127, Q 33:24, and Q 32:21; *al-Amthal*, commentary on Q 20:123–127).

Yet opening the door is not the same as entering it. A person may review the self, or protect an error with further justification. After mentioning hardship and adversity, the Qur'an says: *"Why, then, when Our punishment came upon them, did they not plead humbly? But their hearts hardened, and Satan made what they were doing seem fair to them"* (Q 6:43). Favours may also continue while denial and heedlessness persist. The Qur'an mentions istidraj—being drawn on towards punishment—in the context of those who deny the signs (Q 7:182–183). Abundance alone therefore does not establish God's good pleasure, just as constriction alone is no proof of a person's inward state.

We are not required to be untouched by pain in affliction or to forgo enjoyment of life's favours. Pain and joy are human responses. What is required is that neither pleasure nor adversity become a master that owns the heart and suspends the intellect and the exercise of virtue.

Contentment with God's decree does not contradict striving to remove pain or treat its causes. It is the heart's stillness before God, free of resentment and protest against him, together with trust in his justice, wisdom, and mercy. It does not mean loving pain or abandoning treatment and reform within one's practical scope.

A person who practises a sport they love may feel fatigue and pain without seeing them as negating the meaning they have chosen. The comparison remains limited, however: the pains of life are not all alike, and the human being is not asked to pretend joy in the face of them.

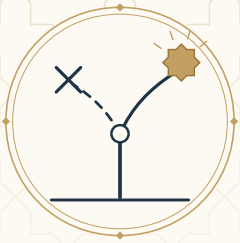
A believer may be content with God's decree and hope for the fruit of trial, while acknowledging that the trial is painful and while striving earnestly to ward it off. Nearness does not come from pain alone, but from patience, work, mercy, and returning to God in its midst: *"Truly God's help is near"* (Q 2:214).

A person's convictions and interpretation of events affect how much fear or hope those events generate and the response they evoke, without creating those events or annulling their reality. We must therefore distinguish reality itself from what our conceptions add to it, as the chapter '*Realism in Life*' explains.

Favour and affliction are objectively real, but their effect within us is shaped by how we understand and respond and by whatever review and action we are able to undertake. Unchosen effects are not ascribed to us as intended choices are. Two people may see the same sea: in one it summons tranquillity, in the other fear—according to each person's experience and what the sea means to them.

However long a stage of this world lasts, it remains limited within the human being's existence, which extends to the hereafter. This does not make light of present pain, but it keeps the moment from becoming the whole horizon and reminds us that what endures is what we become through our response.

The effect of favour or affliction is therefore not confined to what befalls us; it includes what takes shape within us and what we do in response. Not all of that is chosen: responsibility attaches to what we knew, what we intended, and what lay within practical scope: "*And We try you with evil and with good, as a trial; and to Us you will be returned*" (Q 21:35).



PART TWO

Why Satan?

"Those who are mindful of God—when a suggestion from Satan comes to them, they remember, and at once they see clearly"

(Q 7:201).

The existence of Satan does not mean that evil has escaped God's wisdom, nor that Satan has independent sway over the human being. God has allowed him to whisper suggestions and make them seem attractive in a world founded on freedom and trial, but has limited his sway and left the human being equipped with intellect, fitra, revelation, and the power to choose.

Satan calls, makes his suggestions seem attractive, and exploits points of weakness, but compels no one to act. God, exalted is he, recounts Satan's words on the Day of Resurrection: *"I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you responded to me"* (Q 14:22). Responsibility therefore remains with the human being, and whispering does not become an excuse that annuls choice.

The warning against Satan is connected with the pledge that makes the human being's direction clear: *"Did I not enjoin upon you, children of Adam, that you should not worship Satan, for he is a clear enemy to you, and that you should worship Me? This is a straight path"* (Q 36:60–61). Al-Mīzān explains worshipping Satan as obeying his whispering and connects this pledge with the covenant of lordship in Surat al-Aʿrāf. Within this framework, acknowledging God as Lord requires that we worship him, follow his guidance, and not allow enticement to rule our choices (*al-Mīzān*, vol. 17, commentary on Q 36:60–62).

For this reason, Iblis targets the path itself: *"He said: Because you have led me astray, I will surely lie in wait for them on your straight path"* (Q 7:16). Resisting him does not mean annulling life's needs, but refusing what turns us away from truth. This synthesis does not mean that every pledge mentioned in the Qur'an refers to the same event, or that every passing thought breaks the pledge.

The story of Iblis discloses the possibility of a separation between knowledge, instrument, and response: knowledge discloses, the instrument enables, and the response determines the orientation. A person may know part of the truth and possess the means to act, then reject it or act arrogantly. This does not in itself warrant a judgement of existential rank, nor does it make this example the sole proof.

A person's vigilance and will may grow when they resist enticement and return to God after a slip; but this does not make disobedience desirable or necessary for growth. The good lies in resistance, repentance, and learning—not in the wrong itself.

A useful comparison is a road with steep descents and warning signs. The presence of danger calls for vigilance and careful driving, but it neither compels the traveller to fall nor makes falling a condition of arrival.

Nor is it right to ascribe every evil to Satan alone. The self, ignorance, habit, caprice, social injustice, and bad choice are real causes too. The Qur'an mentions Satan's whispering to disclose one pathway to deviation, not to excuse the human being from understanding and correcting the others.

God, exalted is he, says: *"Over My servants you have no authority, except those among the errant who follow you"* (Q 15:42). The rule is that the human being is not Satan's possession; Satan's sway begins when a person repeatedly responds to him.

Sayyid al-Ṭabāṭabāʾī explains in al-Mīzān, in his commentary on these verses, that following Satan is what opens the way to whispering: a person does not begin as "*errant*" because Satan has seized them by force. Rather, choices accumulate until a person becomes more receptive to Satan's prompting. This restores responsibility to its proper place while keeping open the door of return and repentance.

It is an error to judge a whole person by a single sin or one deficient aspect of life. Manifest weakness may coexist with many good works, and the door of repentance and growth remains open. A just view sees the course as a whole, without justifying the wrong or erasing the good.

A beautiful deed does not become wholly ugly because it contains a deficiency, nor do its good aspects turn the deficiency into something good. Sound judgement must hold fairness and accountability together.

Hanzala al-Usayyidi complained to the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, that his awareness of the hereafter fluctuated between the Prophet's gathering and daily life. The Prophet made clear that the self passes through successive states and that remaining in one state is not a condition of sincere faith (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, Book of Repentance, the chapter on the excellence of constant remembrance and reflection upon

the affairs of the hereafter). The point is to understand the nature of striving without allowing fluctuation to become despair or a justification for heedlessness, for the door of return is open: *"God loves those who constantly repent, and he loves those who cleanse themselves"* (Q 2:222).



PART THREE

ISLAMIC PRACTICES



PART THREE

What Is Your Purpose in Life?

"Whoever desires the reward of this world—with God is the reward of this world and of the hereafter; and God is ever Hearing, Seeing"

(Q 4:134).

When people are asked about their greatest goals, answers such as wealth, fame, and status recur. These are understandable goals in an environment that measures success by what appears to others, but they do not by themselves answer the deeper question: what do we want from wealth and status, and what makes a life successful when judged by the needs and purpose of the whole person?

We pursue wealth, position, or fame because we expect them to bring security, strength, recognition, and happiness. But do they deliver what we ask of them, or do they grant certain benefits while leaving the question of purpose unanswered?

Wealth relieves many pressures when it secures basic needs and widens the field of choice, but it does not by itself make the self sound or tranquil. It magnifies what is already within a

person and may expand the scope for good or increase anxiety, depending on how it is used and on the meaning life holds.

This does not mean that pursuing wealth is wrong: lawful provision, sufficiency, and the ability to support a family and serve people are worthy aims. The problem begins when wealth turns from a means into a purpose that swallows the rest of life, or when we ask of it what it cannot give.

Above the threshold of sufficiency and security, tranquillity does not necessarily increase as holdings increase. Choices may widen, but the heart remains in need of meaning, relationships, trust in God, and balance in life—things that cannot be bought.

The road to wealth or fame may also demand time, effort, and strain. Its cost may be acceptable or burdensome, depending on the path taken, the intention, and the balance maintained. It is therefore wrong either to glorify or to condemn that road absolutely. The questions are: what does it build within us, what does it take from us, and for what purpose do we pursue it?

The areas most likely to suffer when this balance is disturbed are close relationships, health, time for worship, presence with family, and the capacity for giving. These are not side issues; they are part of the very life whose success we claim to seek.

The Harvard Study of Adult Development, which has followed participants for decades, draws attention to the effects of good relationships on health and satisfaction with life. This is a useful diagnostic observation, but it does not exhaust the Islamic vision of happiness: relationships themselves need purpose, values, and servanthood to God (Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, The Good Life).

Worse still, attachment to wealth or fame may become a craving that is never satisfied: the more a person obtains, the more they seek—like one who drinks seawater and only grows thirstier. The Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, is reported to have said: "*Were the son of Adam to have two valleys*

of wealth, he would seek a third" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 6436; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 1048).

Contentment, by contrast, enables a person to enjoy what they have without ceasing to strive. The aim is to seek honourable provision sufficient for one's needs and the rights of dependants, without excess, while leaving room in life for worship, relationships, giving, and meaning.

It may be said that success is relative: one person sees it in wealth, another in knowledge, and a third in giving. There is some truth in this, for people differ in their talents, roles, and the forms of achievement that suit them.

Yet the diversity of forms does not mean the absence of a shared truth. Every human being needs meaning, dignity, love, inner harmony under the authority of truth and fitra, and a bond with the Creator—just as the body needs nourishment suited to it even though foods differ. The more this harmony deepens under the authority of truth, the more the causes of inner dispersion and conflict diminish and the self's share of steadiness and inner tranquillity grows. This does not mean that sorrow or pain disappears. Legitimate roads may therefore be many while the direction remains one.

Often a person achieves what once seemed the end of the road, only to discover that the thirst remains and to move on to another goal, then another. The problem is not achievement itself, but burdening it with the role of ultimate purpose. Achievement can bring joy and serve real needs, but it cannot by itself fill the void of meaning.

The persistence of anxiety and unrest among some who enjoy abundance and broad opportunity does not establish a single cause of suffering. It does, however, draw attention to the fact that outward affluence and achievement do not by themselves suffice to build tranquillity.

Psychological and social studies help us identify some factors associated with satisfaction or pain, but they cannot by

themselves determine the purpose of existence. The question of life's meaning is broader than the measurement of mood and requires knowledge of the Creator and of the destiny towards which the human being is moving.

Just as thirst is quenched only under real conditions, happiness and tranquillity have conditions bound to the human being's constitution, fitra, and course. This does not imply one rigid prescription for everyone; it means that the path cannot be separated from truth, goodness, and servanthood, however its details may differ.

Happiness and tranquillity are not formed in moments detached from the rest of life. The ways in which a person sleeps, works, relates to others, worships, and seeks provision all contribute to their becoming. A sound purpose reorders these domains rather than adding a separate activity to them.

Purpose and Happiness

We should first distinguish happiness, joy, satisfaction with life, and inner tranquillity. Joy and sorrow are changing states, while satisfaction with life is a relative assessment shaped by feeling. Inner Tranquillity is the settling of the self and heart in God; it is an authentic fruit, a graduated manifestation, and an inward qualitative sign of nearness. It does not mean the absence of sorrow or pain, and outward emotional calm alone does not establish its possessor's station. Happiness is bound to the soundness, flourishing, and purpose of the self, so a person may possess a real share of it while passing through legitimate sorrow.

A person feels joy at success, a meeting, or a gift, and sorrow at loss or painful news. These emotions are natural and important, but they do not sum up the person's appraisal of life as a whole.

Joy and sorrow are human responses to events and meanings: a person rejoices at glad news and feels sorrow at loss or

pain, and sorrow in itself does not indicate misery, nor joy the soundness of the course. What matters is what these feelings disclose, and how we understand them and respond to them.

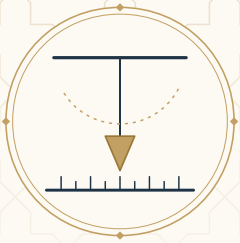
True happiness is the soundness and existential flourishing of the self as its powers and perfections are aligned in a single direction under truth and servanthood. Knowledge, faith, love, will, virtues, and action are brought into harmony. Happiness grows by degrees through striving and trial in this world, while its final outcome is completed in the hereafter through God's bounty and unceasing giving.

The Qur'an describes people on the Day of Resurrection as happy or miserable: *"some will be miserable and others happy"* (Q 11:105). A person's happiness consists in the self becoming sound and actualising the perfection that suits its fitra upon God's path; misery consists in being deprived of this good and moving away from purpose.

Happiness in this sense is neither permanent pleasure nor the absence of pain, but a soundness that grows within the course as one turns sincerely towards truth. It may coexist with sorrow and pain, just as delight may coexist with a corrupted direction. God, exalted is he, says: "O tranquil self! Return to your Lord, well-pleased and well-pleasing" (Q 89:27–28).

Falāḥ is the attainment of the goal, deliverance, and the fulfilment of the final outcome. It therefore has a more strongly otherworldly sense than passing joy or satisfaction, even though its effects appear in this world.

How, then, does the human being journey towards happiness and tranquillity without separating them from purpose? Before answering, we need to distinguish what is real in our needs from what illusion and social conceptions add to them. This is the subject of the next chapter, 'Realism in Life'.



PART THREE

Realism in Life

"Satan promises them and fills them with false hopes,
but his promises are nothing but delusion"

(Q 4:120).

Firmly rooted convictions affect how we see life and respond to it. God, exalted is he, says: *"Say: Each acts according to their shakila"* (Q 17:84). The effect of conviction does not mean that conceptions create reality out of nothing: they may bring us nearer to reality or veil it from us. The question is how to distinguish truth from the illusion we add to it.

Medicine recognises that expectations can affect certain symptoms and responses; the placebo effect is often cited in this context. The phenomenon shows that belief can influence bodily and psychological experience, but it does not mean that illness is mere imagination or that belief replaces diagnosis, treatment, and real-world means (Finniss et al., "*Biological, Clinical, and Ethical Advances of Placebo Effects*", The Lancet, 2010).

Just as expectation may ease certain symptoms, fear and unfounded expectations may heighten the perception of them.

Yet this effect has limits: fire does not become cold because we imagine it so, and the laws of reality do not cease to operate merely because we wish for a different result.

Many real needs are mixed with social and psychological conceptions that exaggerate them or direct them towards the wrong objects. The human being needs security, esteem, and belonging, but may suppose that a particular form of wealth, appearance, or influence is the only road to them.

This embellishment may come from the caprice of the self, social pressure, or Satan's whispering, for he makes promises and fills people with false hopes: *"My Lord, because you have led me astray, I will surely make things on earth seem alluring to them"* (Q 15:39). Mentioning Satan does not excuse us from examining other causes or from the responsibility of choice.

Wealth is a useful reality, and professional success is a reality; but the symbolic value we attach to them may inflate until the number in the account becomes a measure of a person's worth. The illusion then is not in the existence of wealth, but in the absolute meaning we have ascribed to it.

So too with status, appearance, and brand names: they may serve legitimate purposes or preferences, but illusion begins when we borrow our dignity from them or treat social labels as truths that determine a person's station with God.

Even natural desires may become exaggerated through recurring thoughts and their association with power, acceptance, or self-assertion. It is not enough, therefore, to feel a need in order to judge its strength and significance; we need to understand its origin and the purpose that directs it.

This is what God warns us of: a person's striving may go astray while they suppose they are doing well, and the adornment of this world may turn into boasting and competition for ever more, which veil its truth: *"Say: Shall We tell you of the greatest losers in their deeds? Those whose striving went astray in*

the life of this world while they supposed they were doing well" (Q 18:103–104).

The importance of this lies in a simple fact: reality does not change merely because we imagine it otherwise. You can imagine that fire is cold, but it still burns. You can also suppose that outward success will dissolve every anxiety, only for experience to reveal the limits of that promise.

Perceiving reality as it is does not call us to despise the world or withdraw from it, but to engage with it wisely: to understand the benefits and limits of things, use the available means, and never elevate a means to the status of an end.

In the Islamic vision, reality is not confined to what is sensed: the barzakh and the hereafter are truths of the unseen disclosed by revelation, and our deeds in this world shape our relation to them. This world is therefore a real stage with real effects—but it is not the end of the road.

A sensible traveller neither denies the road nor forgets the destination. They make good use of the journey while preparing to arrive. Likewise, the believer lives this worldly life in earnest without making it the final dwelling-place.

No time or place encompasses God; rather, time and place subsist through him. The verse points to his encompassment, qayyūmiyya, and non-spatial nearness to the human being: *"We are nearer to him than the jugular vein"* (Q 50:16).

God is the Real, through whom every existent subsists. We are his creatures and need him, and the traces of his power appear in creation. Hence Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, says in the Supplication of Arafa: "*My God, how can you be pointed to by that which is, in its very existence, in need of you? Does anything other than you possess a manifestness you do not possess, so that it could make you manifest?*" (the Supplication of Arafa, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl).

The story of Moses and the righteous servant shows that God's care may operate through events, persons, and causes whose full wisdom we do not see at the time. This does not annul the regularities; it teaches that our knowledge of them is limited and that divine aid may reach us through regularities, persons, and causes in ways that lie beyond our perception.

When the human being becomes heedless of God's qayyūmiyya and of their own ontological dependence on him, the greatest blessings may pass unnoticed. Keeping the bond with God in view opens life to a different meaning: at every moment a person subsists through One from whom they are never absent and receives guidance that is never cut off.

From here spring tranquillity and strength—not because the believer is guaranteed that events will unfold as desired, but because they know that nothing is absent from God's knowledge, that his mercy encompasses all things, and that whatever they lose in this world does not sever the bond with him. The Supplication of Arafa expresses this: "*My God, blind is the eye that does not see you watching over it; and lost is the bargain of a servant to whom you have given no share of your love*" (the Supplication of Arafa, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl).

In the Imami vision, this bond deepens through love of the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, and of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, and through following their example: they are guides to God's path and models of servanthood in life.

When a person grasps the breadth of this reality, their relationship with the world changes. They work within it, enjoy its good things, and fulfil their responsibility, but do not make it their greatest concern or the limit of their knowledge. The meaning of life widens instead of shrinking to the immediate.

The journey towards God requires the human being to know the self, its need and receptivities, and to distinguish what is real from what caprice and conceptions manufacture. Imam

Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Whoever knows himself has known his Lord*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam, no. 7946).

Among the most useful means of deepening this insight is constant reflection—upon the universe and existence, upon relationships and events, and upon the self: the feelings and motives at work within it, and the decisions and results that issue from it.

Because part of reality is unseen and beyond the reach of the senses alone, we need revelation together with the intellect and experience. The Qur'an and transmitted supplications do not replace thought; they open before it a horizon it cannot reach on its own.

The verses of Surat al-Qaṣaṣ present the story of Qārūn to show how our assessment of reality changes when the hereafter's standard of judgement is disclosed: "*So he went out before his people in his adornment. Those who desired the life of this world said: Would that we had the like of what Qārūn has been given; he is indeed a man of tremendous fortune. But those who had been given knowledge said: Woe to you! God's reward is better for one who believes and does righteous work—and none are granted it but the patient. Then We caused the earth to cave in with him and his dwelling; and he had no company to help him apart from God, nor was he one who could help himself. And those who had wished for his place the day before began to say: Ah—it is God who spreads out provision for whom he wills of his servants, and restricts it; had God not graced us, he would have caused it to cave in with us. Ah—the unbelievers do not prosper. That Abode of the hereafter—We appoint it for those who desire neither superiority in the earth nor corruption; and the good end belongs to those who are mindful of God*" (Q 28:79–83).



PART THREE

The Journey to God

"O human being, you are toiling towards your Lord, and you will meet him"

(Q 84:6).

This chapter returns to the question of life's purpose: how does faith in God become a daily way of life that draws a person nearer to him—without separating worship from work or the hereafter from this world?

The journey towards God means directing the whole of life towards servanthood—in knowledge, choice, work, and relationships. This is not a course isolated from life, but a way of living it: a person corrects the direction whenever it strays and grows in awareness of their dependence on God and responsibility before him.

Fitra is a distinctive mode of the human being's creation. It comprises a general, undifferentiated ground of truth known by presence, an original love of absolute perfection, and an orientation towards servanthood. It is not detailed conceptual knowledge or completed religious awareness, and it does not compel response; its effects may therefore become mixed with

caprice, habit, and veils without the root itself being uprooted.

For fitra to emerge and its true object to be recognised, the human being needs the clarification of revelation, the discernment of the intellect, and tazkiya, lest a person replace nearness to God with magnification of the self or pursuit of a limited image of power: *"So set your face towards the religion, inclining to truth—the fitra of God upon which he originated people"* (Q 30:30).

Uprightness means continuing to act according to this guidance. God, exalted is he, says: *"Those who say, 'Our Lord is God,' and then remain upright—the angels descend upon them: 'Do not fear or grieve, but receive glad tidings of the Garden you were promised'"* (Q 41:30). In light of what has already been said about the covenant and the pledge, the theory reads this uprightness as continuing to fulfil what acknowledging God's lordship requires. The straight path identifies the road; uprightness describes the human being's way of travelling it. This connection is inferred by bringing the texts together; it is not a direct explanation of the verse from Surat Fuṣṣilat in terms of the event of the covenant.

Faithfulness appears in worship, justice, and the fulfilment of rights together. The injunctions in Surat al-Anʿām include the command to honour the pledge to God, followed by the command to follow his straight path (Q 6:152–153). Uprightness does not mean that the self becomes complete in a moment, but that it stands firm upon truth and corrects the errors that come to light. God's words bring uprightness and repentance together: *"So remain upright as you have been commanded, you and those who have repented with you, and do not transgress. He sees all that you do"* (Q 11:112).

Tranquillity grows as the self and heart come to rest in God and their powers and direction are ordered within servanthood

rather than pulled towards conflicting ends. It is an authentic fruit and a gradual manifestation of nearness, even while sorrow, anxiety, and trial remain possible. Tranquillity does not mean the absence of human feeling, but the stability of the self's true reference through these states.

This journey is bound to what the project calls Inner Truthfulness: a form of inner integrity in which the self's four dimensions come into concord under the authority of truth and the demands of fitra. The intellect understands truth, the heart accepts it, the spirit turns towards God and the purpose of servanthood, and the body embodies it in word and deed. Facing the self, disclosing gaps between knowledge, love, intention, and conduct, self-accounting, repentance, and reform are mechanisms of this course, not its definition. Part Four of *Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview* establishes the definition and limits of this law; *The Immortal Self* explores its inward course in greater depth, while *No Limits* brings its applications closer to the reader.

In this way, Inner Truthfulness is an aspect of truthfulness in fulfilling the pledge, not merely a feeling of being in harmony with the self. The Qur'an describes people as those who "*were true to what they pledged to God*" (Q 33:23, excerpt). The verse on righteousness brings together faithfulness to the pledge, faith, giving, and steadfastness, then describes those who embody them as truthful (Q 2:177). Explaining this truthfulness through the concord of the self's dimensions, however, is the theory's own formulation.

How Do We Journey to God?

The journey brings together two complementary domains: revealed guidance, which makes clear what pleases God, and the formative domain, in which the human being acts through available means and encounters choice and trial. The revealed

law provides the standard that keeps the journey in balance, while life supplies the arena in which it is lived.

The matter resembles a journey that requires both a destination and a road. Knowing the destination without moving will not bring a person there, while movement without a guide may only hasten them in the wrong direction. The believer therefore joins sincere intention, earnest work, and continual return to God's guidance.

This begins with setting thoughts and beliefs right, then turning them into habits and stances, and protecting the heart and intellect from influences that corrupt direction—without imagining that the self can be isolated from the world or that the entire environment can be "sterilised". What is sought is awareness, choice, and reform within ordinary life: *"By Time: the human being is indeed in loss—except those who believe, do righteous deeds, counsel one another to truth, and counsel one another to patience"* (Q 103:1–3).

Consider the words of God, exalted is he: *"God is the Guardian of those who believe; he brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve—their guardians are ṭāghūt, who bring them out of the light into the depths of darkness"* (Q 2:257). God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.

Nearness to God frees the human being from enslavement to caprice, fear of people, and morbid attachment to results; but it does not place a person outside human feeling or erase emotion. Perfection does not mean never feeling sorrow or anxiety; it means not allowing these feelings to make a person lose direction or surrender the will.

The Whispered Prayer of Shaʿbān, transmitted from Imam Ali, peace be upon him, contains the words: "*My God, grant me the perfection of wholehearted turning to you, and illumine the eyes of our hearts with the light of their gaze towards you, until the eyes of hearts pierce the veils of light and reach the mine of*

Majesty, and our spirits become suspended by the glory of your holiness" (al-Munājāt al-Shaʿbāniyya, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl).

On this road, the human being develops what becomes a quality of the self—knowledge, understanding, will, and stable dispositions—together with wisdom, justice, mercy, and the other perfections. At the same time, the person develops resources, initial capacities, and opportunities that widen the field of action. What is actualised within the self gives response its breadth, while direction gives it ethical value. Awareness of servanthood and ontological dependence on God also deepens: capacity does not become independence, and awareness of dependence does not become helplessness; striving and reliance upon God form one movement.

God created life in a world where opposites and trials stand side by side, so that it might be a real field for choice and action. These conditions do not push the human being automatically towards perfection: a person may respond to them with good or evil, and grows by choosing well, learning, and returning to God.

God also made people different in preparedness, capacities, conditions, and environments, so that he might try each person in what he has given and create opportunities for mutual knowledge, complementarity, and service. Responsibility is measured by the clarification received and by practical scope: "*And We made you peoples and tribes that you might come to know one another*" (Q 49:13), and "*that he may test you in what he has given you; so compete in good works*" (Q 5:48).

For this reason, God placed at our disposal the regularities and beings of the universe that assist us in discharging the Trust and journeying towards him: "*He subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, all together, from him*" (Q 45:13). He made what is on the earth an adornment and a trial: "*We have made all that is on the earth an adornment for it, to*

test them as to which of them is best in deed" (Q 18:7). He then commanded us to strive upon it: "*He is the One who made the earth manageable for you; so travel through its regions and eat of his provision. To him is the resurrection*" (Q 67:15). In this arena we embody our servanthood to God: "*I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me*" (Q 51:56), and we discharge the Trust of vicegerency while remaining in need of him: "*And when your Lord said to the angels: I am placing a vicegerent upon the earth*" (Q 2:30).

Because the human being is charged with this Trust, God has not left the human being without clarification: he has called people to flee to him, race in good works, and vie in nearness. This call does not annul differences of role, capacity, and circumstance; it gives everyone a shared direction while tying each person's responsibility to what God has given and to practical scope.

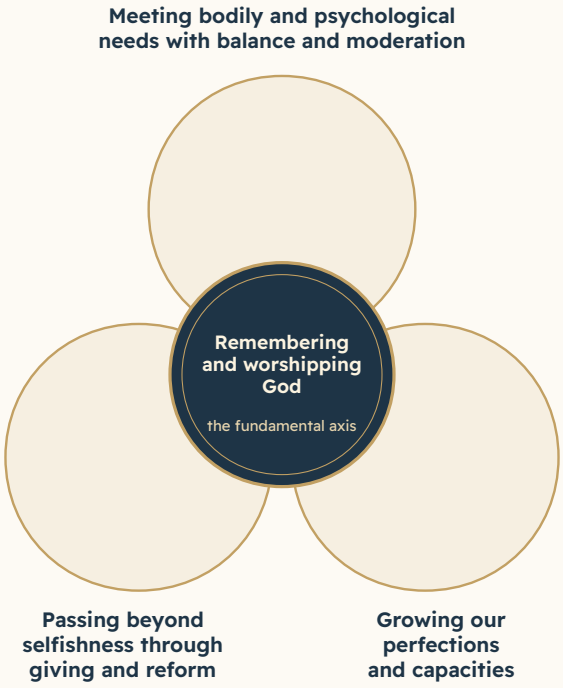
The Axes of the Journey to God

The general axes of the journey may be organised into four interwoven domains of daily practice, approached with balance and awareness:

Meeting bodily and psychological needs with balance and moderation. This axis concerns satisfying these needs in worldly life without excess or neglect. God, exalted is he, says: "*Say: Who has forbidden the adornments God has brought forth for his servants, or the good things of provision? Say: They are for those who believe during the life of this world, and exclusively theirs on the Day of Resurrection*" (Q 7:32), and: "*He is the One who made the earth manageable for you; so travel through its regions and eat of his provision. To him is the resurrection*" (Q 67:15).

Growing our perfections and capacities. The next axis is to develop what has become actual within the self and the resources that widen its field of action. Settled understanding,

disciplined will, and a skill that has become a stable disposition belong to the self's realised strength. Opportunity, wealth, office, and initial capacity widen the field of action and take their value from the direction they serve. God, exalted is he, says: *"O you who believe, be mindful of God, and seek the means of approach to him, and strive in his way, that you may prosper"* (Q 5:35), and: *"As We sent among you a Messenger from among yourselves, reciting Our signs to you, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you what you did not know"* (Q 2:151).



The axes of the journey to God: four interwoven domains of daily practice

Passing beyond selfishness through giving and reform. God, exalted is he, said: *"You will never attain righteousness*

until you spend of what you love" (Q 3:92), and he called us to carry the message of goodness and reform to all humanity: *"You are the best community brought forth for humankind: you enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God"* (Q 3:110).

Remembering and worshipping God. Remembering God, worshipping him, and maintaining the bond with him remain the fundamental axis of the journey to God: *"When the prayer is concluded, disperse through the land and seek of God's bounty, and remember God often, that you may prosper"* (Q 62:10).

Nor has the revealed law confined itself to setting out these axes; it has prescribed acts of worship, ethics, and rulings that assist the human being in practising them. God has also opened the world to work, learning, and the use of available means—without the factors of formation and the environment becoming mechanical forces that determine a person's becoming or drive them to good despite themselves.

Paths that Lead to God

The general axes of the journey are shared, but their forms of application vary with people's preparedness and circumstances. Each person has strengths and weaknesses, an environment, experience, and challenges that do not exactly match those of anyone else.

The practices that help each person draw nearer to God therefore differ according to their characteristics, duties, and circumstances. Difference of path does not mean difference of purpose: the criterion is that the work be righteous and pleasing to God—*"and that I may do righteous work that pleases you"* (Q 27:19).

The journey towards God may bring the joy of nearness and the meaning of tranquillity, yet it remains a striving marked by fatigue, hesitation, and trial. It helps a person bear and channel

anxiety and sorrow without implying that every psychological pain vanishes through worship alone or that seeking support and treatment contradicts faith.

Sport offers an analogy: steady practice develops capacity more effectively than a brief surge, and over time a person experiences the effects of perseverance. Likewise, the sweetness of worship and love deepens through practice, truthfulness, and gentleness, as the Whispered Prayer of the Lovers says: "*Who is it that has tasted the sweetness of your love and then sought another in your place?*" (al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya, the Whispered Prayer of the Lovers).

The analogy goes no further. The journey is not a prescription for removing every pain, but a relationship with God that reorders pain and joy within a wider meaning and grants strength for work, patience, and return.

In prayer, fasting, remembrance, charity, and the other acts of worship, the Muslim already has enduring gateways to this path. What is sought is not a new burden of training, but to bring existing practices to life through intention and awareness and to connect them with character, work, and responsibility.

The question, then, remains: what principles preserve this journey from impulsiveness and imbalance and enable it to continue amid the realities of life?

The coming chapters take up these principles and practices within a framework that brings together love, trust, balance, sincerity, and gentleness.

PART THREE

Principles of the Journey to God

"Say: If you love God, follow me—God will love you" (Q 3:31).



The principles that preserve this journey from impulsiveness and imbalance and enable it to continue amid the realities of life

Love of God

Love of God and turning towards him are among the deepest motives of the journey, yet they do not always appear in a

single emotional form. They may begin with the pursuit of truth, goodness, beauty, and mercy, then become clearer as a person comes to know the Lord and sets aside caprice in choosing their direction: *"So set your face towards the religion, inclining to truth—the fitra of God upon which he originated people"* (Q 30:30).

These motives may mix with the love of wealth, status, or influence. What is sought is not to annul life's needs, but to order them: the means become servants of the good, and do not turn into objects of worship that seize the heart.

As a person knows God more deeply as the source of existence, sufficiency, and perfection, they see worldly loves anew: beauty becomes a favour that points towards God, strength a trust, and wealth a means—none of them an independent purpose: *"O people, you are the ones in need of God; and God—he is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy"* (Q 35:15).

Knowledge of the Creator and recognition of favour give rise to thankfulness. Thankfulness does not operate mechanically within the self; it requires attention, remembrance, and response until it becomes not merely a word but a way of using what God has given.

When gratitude is sincere, love grows and servanthood takes root in the heart. Nearness through Servanthood then deepens as knowledge and freely chosen commitment grow. God's command is then experienced as a path to the person's own reality rather than as a heavy burden or an externally imposed constraint.

Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says in Nahj al-Balāgha: "*The first of religion is knowledge of him; the perfection of knowledge of him is affirming him; the perfection of affirming him is affirming his oneness; and the perfection of affirming his oneness is sincerity towards him…*" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1).

The first principle, then, is to cultivate love of God: to know him, remember his favours, contemplate his names and signs, and translate love into following and action. Emotional intensity alone is not the measure; what matters is how genuinely that love is expressed in life.

This knowledge grows through reading, reflection, worship, service to people, and living according to the guidance of Islam. Every genuine path to goodness can deepen a person's knowledge of the Lord when its direction is sound.

The love of God does not compete with life's legitimate needs; it gives them order and meaning. Work, family, friendship, rest, and knowledge do not stand outside the path; they enter it when lived within the balance of servanthood.

Trust in God

The journey begins with God's gracious care and guidance before human effort; the human being then responds with the freedom given. The Supplication of Abu Hamza says: "*Through you I have known you; you pointed me to you, and called me to you*" (the Supplication of Abū Ḥamza al-Thumālī, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl). God has promised guidance to those who strive sincerely and, according to what his wisdom requires, opens before them paths they had not seen: "*And those who strive for Our sake—We will surely guide them to Our ways*" (Q 29:69).

Trust in God does not mean that we understand everything that befalls us, nor that we count every pain a sign of good pleasure or every success a sign of nearness. It means standing firm in faith in his mercy and wisdom while using the available means and facing trial—without letting our lack of understanding of the details lead us to think ill of him.

This trust grows through knowledge, remembrance, and the experience of sincere reliance upon God. It is also strengthened when we recall God's past favours rather than confining our

sight to the present crisis. Keeping in view the human being's bond with God and dependence on him brings tranquillity to the heart without annulling natural sorrow or the need for human support.

When doubts or painful questions arise, they need not be suppressed, nor should the intellect be ignored. They should be considered in light of what the person has come to know of God's wisdom and mercy, then examined through questioning, reflection, and appropriate help—without allowing temporary perplexity to destroy the root of trust.

We may be unable to interpret a particular event, as a child may be unable to understand some of what a carer does. Yet faith in God does not rest on this limited comparison; it rests on knowledge that he is the Creator, the Knowing, the Merciful, and that all good is in his hand. The Whispered Prayer of the Hopeful asks: "*How can I hope in any other than you, when all good is in your hand?*" (al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya, the Whispered Prayer of the Hopeful).

This does not mean asserting that every deprivation we suffer represents the best possible outcome or that we know its wisdom. It means acknowledging the limits of our knowledge, continuing in supplication and work, and trusting that God neither wrongs his servants nor leaves them without mercy.

The answer may come in a form other than the one requested; God may open one door and close another. Our duty is to observe, learn, and seek counsel—not to explain every result through a hasty reading of the unseen: "*How could the One who created not know? He is the Subtle, the All-Aware*" (Q 67:14).

In adversity we do not lose our bond with God, and in plenty we do not dispense with him. God, exalted is he, says: "*He has written mercy upon himself*" (Q 6:12).

Trust in God is the spirit of reliance upon him, but it does not mean abandoning planning, treatment, or the search for

provision. All of these are means we are commanded to use. Reliance upon God means using legitimate means according to knowledge and practical scope, without the heart treating them as independent or supposing that they guarantee the outcome.

One meaning of this reliance is that a person should not treat anyone besides God as an independent guarantor or object of ultimate dependence, while still using the available means and seeking help from people in matters within their capacity: *"We gave Moses the Book and made it guidance for the Children of Israel: Take no guardian apart from Me"* (Q 17:2).

Balance

Picture someone who trains a single muscle and neglects the rest of the body: this does not produce balanced fitness, however strong that muscle becomes. So too, a human being may develop one aspect while neglecting other responsibilities: succeeding professionally while weakening family life, or becoming socially active while neglecting tazkiya of the self.

Deeds differ in their ranks and priorities; but life needs a balance that preserves the rights of the self, the family, work, society, and worship: *"He raised the sky and set the balance, so that you do not transgress the balance"* (Q 55:7–8).

Imbalance may appear when one legitimate aspect encroaches upon other responsibilities: a person becomes absorbed in study, work, or public activity, while tazkiya of the self, care for family, and attention to bodily, psychological, and spiritual needs are weakened.

The reverse may also occur: concern becomes confined to reforming the self or family until duty towards society is neglected, or professional success is pursued at the expense of everything else. The problem is not the strength of one aspect,

but its becoming a permanent excuse for neglecting another right.

A person therefore needs to review their motives: was this domain chosen because it is the most important at this stage, or because it is the easiest and dearest to the self? Is absorption in it consistent with the other duties and rights that must be upheld?

A person's inclination towards a particular domain may be a legitimate door to giving and excellence, but inclination alone does not always determine priority. It must be weighed against duty, circumstance, the rights of others, and the purpose for which the person works.

We enter life with bodily, psychological, and spiritual needs: food, security, love, knowledge, rest, and meaning. These needs do not conflict in themselves, but disorder in their ranking, or excess in one of them, exhausts the human being.

The need for security, love, and rest is neither a defect nor a sin. The Qur'an mentions human weakness in the context of easing the burden: *"God desires to lighten your burden, and the human being was created weak"* (Q 4:28). Ontological dependence on God, by contrast, is a reality that embraces the strong and the weak alike; it does not mean psychological helplessness or punishment. What needs correction here is a fear or attachment that comes to dominate a decision and drives a person to abandon a right or overstep a limit—not the existence of the need itself. Refinement attends to needs and governs how they are met; it does not seek to erase them (see *al-Mīzān*, vol. 4, commentary on Q 4:26–28).

The body is a Trust: it is part of the human being's existence in this world and the field through which they act. Fulfilling this Trust requires preserving it, caring for it, developing its capacity, and using it in the service of truth. This includes food, sleep, rest, movement, treatment, recreation, and lawful enjoyment within their proper place and limits.

Caring for the body is therefore not a departure from the journey towards God, but one of the conditions for fulfilling our responsibilities.

The journey towards God therefore does not require the body's needs to be annulled or the person to withdraw from life. It calls for needs to be met in balance, without excess or neglect: *"Say: Who has forbidden the adornments God has brought forth for his servants, or the good things of provision?"* (Q 7:32).

Nor must every aspect receive the same measure every day: balance is assessed over time and according to age, practical scope, and circumstance. What matters is that legitimate absorption does not become permanent neglect of another right.

Imam Musa al-Kazim, peace be upon him, is reported to have counselled a person to divide time among whispered prayer to God, earning a livelihood, the company of trusted people who truthfully disclose one's faults, and permitted rest that supports the remaining responsibilities (Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl, his counsel to Hisham).

Sincerity towards God

A person may perform a useful deed with a good intention and be rewarded for it, but sincerity towards God means that God's good pleasure remains the highest aim and that legitimate natural aims remain subordinate to this standard rather than independent of it. In this way, sincerity protects work from the pursuit of appearances and praise. Intention gives an act direction, but it neither validates a wrongful means nor cancels a binding right.

A small, sincere deed may have a deeper effect than a great deed tainted by the desire to be seen. The point is not to measure reward in numbers, but to remember that God looks at the heart and the deed together. A report states: *"The believer's*

intention is better than his deed" (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, the chapter on intention).

Gentleness with the Self

The Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, said: "*Gentleness is not placed in a thing but it adorns it, nor removed from a thing but it disfigures it*" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 2594).

Zeal may lead some people to burden themselves with worship and work beyond their power, or to compare their path with the stations and experiences of others. The result may be withdrawal after a burst of enthusiasm. Hence the counsel to be gentle and to recognise the heart's periods of receptivity and retreat.

Gentleness does not mean laxity or abandoning striving. It means choosing a measure that can be borne and sustained, with balance in worship, work, family, and rest. The journey towards God unfolds within life, not at the expense of the traveller's humanity or the rights of those around them.

The balance here is quiet constancy: firmness in the essentials, together with a measure of supererogatory devotion and striving that the self can bear—without excess that exhausts it or neglect that causes it to lose direction. What builds the human being is what preserves the bond with God and supports the fulfilment of duties and the rights of those around the person.



PART THREE

Seeking Knowledge

"Only those of his servants who possess knowledge truly stand in awe of God"

(Q 35:28).

Knowledge is among the noblest gifts God has given the human being. Through it, a person understands the self and the world and finds a path to the Lord; it is one of the greatest domains of intellectual perfection. A person must therefore cultivate knowledge in order to choose well and draw near to God.

For this reason, the Qur'an joined teaching and purification in the prophetic mission: *"reciting Our signs to you, purifying you, teaching you the Book and wisdom"* (Q 2:151). Knowledge guides work, and purification sets its direction right.

The greatest knowledge is knowledge of God and his oneness, together with knowledge of the self and of the reality of human need and servanthood to God. This knowledge determines the purpose and place of the other sciences.

Knowledge discloses truth and gives the human being material for consideration and choice, but it is not faith in itself. Faith

is the heart's commitment to truth, its assent to it, and its adoption of truth as a governing reference for life; its truthfulness and rootedness appear in intention, action, and following. A person may know something without assenting to it: Satan knew God's command and did not respond. Action is the fruit and embodiment of faith; it is neither part of the definition of knowledge nor the whole definition of faith. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says: "*The first of religion is knowledge of him… and the perfection of affirming his oneness is sincerity towards him*" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 1).

Knowledge is therefore a foundation of the journey towards God and of every conscious movement. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says to Kumayl: "*There is no action for which you do not need knowledge*" (Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl). Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*One who acts without insight is like a traveller who has left the road: the faster they travel, the farther they stray*" (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 1, Book of the Excellence of Knowledge, the chapter on one who acts without knowledge, no. 1).

The opening of revelation with the word "*Read*" (Q 96:1) conveys a clear message: the awakening of the intellect and the pursuit of knowledge, not blind imitation.

Theoretical knowledge gives us a framework for understanding the world and may reach certainty through evidence. Yet it does not become rooted and effective faith in life until the heart assents to it and it is reflected in intention, action, and review. Certainty is an epistemic quality, whereas faith is a stance of the heart and a governing reference for life; practice discloses how firmly that stance is rooted and helps it grow.

Through knowledge, contemplation, and reflection, we distinguish reality from the illusion we add to it and understand the limits of our perception and our need for revelation and experience.

The knowledge a person needs is not confined to the religious sciences. Every sound discipline that broadens our understanding of the self, the universe, and society and serves people can contribute to cultivating the earth and discharging the Trust.

Knowledge of God, creed, the self, and jurisprudence remains foundational to direction. Not everyone must specialise in these fields, but each person needs enough grounding in them to worship God with insight, and should then deepen that knowledge through reflection, action, and responsible questioning.

Regular reading in trustworthy books helps build this foundation: choosing a good book and reading it without haste is better than scattering one's attention among many sources from which no coherent understanding emerges.

The Qur'an lies at the heart of this journey. Thoughtful recitation, together with recourse to a trustworthy commentary when difficulty arises, binds knowledge to revelation and keeps it from becoming scattered information.

Reflection also deepens understanding and insight. A person contemplates the self and what is at work within it, society and the forces moving through it, and the signs of creation, and relates all of this to God, his oneness, and his attributes of perfection: *"We will show them Our signs on the horizons and within themselves"* (Q 41:53).

Reflection does not always require a long, dedicated session. It may occur while travelling, waiting, or reviewing the day, provided that a person pays honest attention and turns what they observe into a question of meaning and direction.



PART THREE

Knowing the Self: Watchfulness, Self-Accounting, and Tazkiya

"Say: Each acts according to their shakila"

(Q 17:84).

Why Do We Need to Know the Self?

Every human self has its own properties, degrees of preparedness, and history. The whole person takes shape within an environment of circumstances, relationships, messages, models, incentives, opportunities, and obstacles. Over time, these affect knowledge, loves, habits, shakila, and direction without reducing the person to a mere product of the environment or annulling agency. The state of the body, heredity, upbringing, society, events, and repeated choices also contribute to this becoming, and patterns and inclinations take root over time. A person cannot therefore be known through a single factor, nor

should character be treated as a fixed mould: the self continues to become and change throughout life.

The self gives rise to many of our thoughts, emotions, decisions, and habits. Hence God, exalted is he, says: *"Say: Each acts according to their shakila"* (Q 17:84). Knowing the shakila does not mean surrendering to it, but understanding what has taken root within us so that it may be purified and directed.

God opens many doors of righteous work to the human being. Once duties are fulfilled and prohibitions avoided, goodness is not confined to one form. Knowledge of the self helps a person choose what suits their capacity and circumstances and serves the message, without allowing personal inclination to overrule truth.

Surat al-Kahf presents figures whose roles and circumstances differ: the Companions of the Cave, Moses, the righteous servant, and Dhu al-Qarnayn. Their different paths were no barrier to truthfulness; each fulfilled the responsibility entrusted to them in their own place.

A person therefore needs to know their strengths and weaknesses, what strengthens resolve and what disperses it, so that they can choose a field of righteous work consciously and recognise what learning, help, or striving is needed.

Knowing the self is not an independent purpose or a project of self-absorption; its value is that it assists balance, tazkiya, and the discharge of the Trust. The more truthfully a person sees themselves, the less they are surprised by weakness and the better they use what God has given them.

Here, self-awareness means being sufficiently conscious of one's thoughts, feelings, motives, and conduct to observe them and compare them with one's values and with what pleases God. The person can then take a conscious stance towards them rather than being led by habit without review.

This knowledge does not grant absolute control over the self, but it widens the space of choice and reveals patterns of self-deception and repetition. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*He has won the greatest triumph who attains knowledge of the self*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa-Durar al-Kalim).

Do We Know Ourselves as Well as We Think?

A person tends to believe that they know their motives clearly, yet often interprets actions after the fact in a way that preserves their self-image. Trusting the first feeling is therefore not enough; nor, on the other hand, is it right to assume that a person is entirely a stranger to themselves.

Some motives are clear; some are mixed with a habit, a fear, or an interest we do not quickly notice. Knowing the self is a cumulative process resting on honest observation, comparing word with deed, and benefiting from the counsel of others—not on claiming a complete unveiling of the hidden interior.

A verse, a word of counsel, or an experience in ease or hardship may alert us to something we have overlooked. Yet being alerted does not mean that we have understood the cause or recognised what needs to be put right. Sound criticism may hurt, while a false excuse may comfort us. We therefore review the evidence, the facts, and the rights involved before judging. The cause of constriction may remain unclear even when we can correct an error that has become evident to us. This discernment is what "disclosure" means in the Law of Inner Truthfulness—not disclosure of the unseen or a diagnosis of a person's state from their feelings.

The question, then, is not whether you possess awareness or lack it entirely, but whether your knowledge of yourself widens or narrows—and whether you set it right whenever experience discloses an error in your estimation.

How Do We Deepen Self-Knowledge?

Self-knowledge is deepened through complementary practices: watchfulness, self-accounting, and seeking counsel. These are not mechanical tests or invitations to permanent absorption in the inner world, but means that support truthfulness, tazkiya, and sound choice.

1 Clarity of Values and Purpose

A person needs to express their values and purposes in clear language, then look for their presence in decisions rather than in wishes alone. Discussing them with people whose wisdom is trusted, and reviewing them as circumstances change, protects a person from unconsciously adopting the goals of the surrounding culture.

This review begins with questions of meaning: Why am I here? Which Trust best fits my capacity and circumstances? Through which talents can I serve? What do I need to learn or refine? Professional, family, and social decisions then take shape around these questions, while the possibility of correction remains open.

When values and some personal patterns become clear, a person is better able to understand situations and make a decision not ruled by immediate reactions alone. God, exalted is he, says of those endowed with understanding: *"and reflect upon the creation of the heavens and the earth"* (Q 3:191).

2 Periodic Self-Review

This review rests on observing past experiences and what they disclose of strengths and weaknesses, helpful or hindering habits, and needs for learning or tazkiya. A person may write a summary in a notebook and return to it from time to time to see what has changed and what still needs work.

3 Learning from Counsel and Feedback

The Qur'an places mutual counsel to truth and patience among the causes of deliverance: *"By Time: the human being is indeed in loss—except those who believe, do righteous deeds, counsel one another to truth, and counsel one another to patience"* (Q 103:1–3). Many reports extol sincere counsel, including the words of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family: "*Religion is sincere counsel*" (Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 55).

Seeking counsel not only gives a person an outside view; it also helps frame the question clearly and reveals angles that are difficult to see from within the situation. Even so, counsel remains material for reflection, not a verdict that annuls personal responsibility.

Useful counsel follows several principles that preserve its integrity and effectiveness:

Choosing a truthful counsellor. A person tends to view the self through their own conceptions and interests and may therefore need an honest perspective from outside. Counsel is sought from someone known for wisdom, care, and trustworthiness—not from one who misleads or flatters. God, exalted is he, says: *"Nor would I take those who lead others astray as helpers"* (Q 18:51). Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "A *friend (ṣadīq) is so named only because he is truthful (yaṣduq) with you about yourself and your faults*" (al-Rayshahrī, Mīzān al-Ḥikma, entry 'al-Ṣadīq').

Clarity of the question. The more specific the question, the more objectively a counsellor can answer it and the easier it is for the seeker to understand the answer without loading it with unintended meanings. Very general questions tend to yield general judgements that are difficult to use.

Seeking counsel at the point of need. The need for counsel grows during a comprehensive self-review, before a difficult decision, or when a situation recurs that a person cannot

understand alone. This need not become permanent dependence on the opinions of others: the aim is to broaden one's perspective and then bear responsibility for the decision.

Receiving criticism well. Criticism may hurt, especially when it is harshly expressed or conflicts with a person's reading of the situation. Yet automatic self-defence may conceal the truth in what has been said. The Treatise of Rights of Imam Zayn al-Abidin, peace be upon him, states that a counsellor has the right to be heard; that God should be praised if the counsel is sound; and that the counsellor should not be accused if mistaken.

Faithfulness to a counsellor includes thanking the person for truthfulness, considering the words calmly, and acting upon what proves sound. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Hear counsel from one who offers it to you, and bind it upon yourselves*" (al-Rayshahrī, Mīzān al-Ḥikma, entry 'al-Naṣīḥa').

Watchfulness in the Course of the Day

Watchfulness means noticing a passing thought, feeling, or motive before it turns directly into speech or action. It does not require suppressing feelings, but recognising them, understanding what they indicate, and choosing a response that accords with one's values.

This brief pause widens the space of freedom between stimulus and response: a person can grow calm, consider the outcome, and adjust the action before habit or emotion takes over.

This is the practical meaning of the words of God, exalted is he: *"O you who believe, be mindful of God, and let every self observe what it has sent ahead for tomorrow"* (Q 59:18). Watchfulness is responsible attention to what a person is shaping—not endless absorption in the details of the interior.

When Watchfulness Becomes an Exhausting Preoccupation

Watchfulness can turn into absorption in every passing thought and analysis of every feeling, increasing distress rather than easing it. Review should therefore lead to understanding or action rather than deprive a person of the ability to live. When distressing thoughts become persistent or disabling, seeking help from a trustworthy specialist neither contradicts reliance upon God nor weakens faith.

- Bind watchfulness to trust in God and compassion for the self, not to a permanent fear of error.
- Set specific times for review, then return to work and the present instead of getting caught in repeated analysis throughout the day.
- Distinguish a passing thought from a settled intention and an act. Not everything that crosses the mind is a choice or a description of character.
- Do not put the self on trial for every contradictory passing thought. Look instead at what a person adopts and acts upon.
- Allow feelings to appear and be understood without suppressing them or giving them free rein, then choose how to act in light of that understanding.
- Seek the help of wise and truthful people, and keep away from relationships that feed fear, contempt, or unhealthy attachment.

What is sought is balance: attention that reveals the inner life without imprisoning a person within it, and review that ends in a decision, acceptance, or a request for help—not watchfulness that never ceases.

4 Self-Accounting with Gentleness and Truthfulness

Calling the self to account is a daily or periodic review of what a person has done and left undone, so as to recognise occasions for thankfulness, seeking forgiveness, and correction. It is an act of worship that connects knowledge with action—not a "*technique*" that guarantees comfort or achievement. A report states: "*He is not of us who does not call himself to account every day*" (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, the chapter on accounting for one's deeds, no. 2).

Accounting does not mean berating or harshly condemning the self, but asking calmly: where did I do well, so that I may thank God and sustain it? Where did I fall short, so that I may seek forgiveness and set it right? What is the next realistic step? Truthful self-accounting ends in gratitude, reform, or repentance—not in a blanket condemnation of the self.

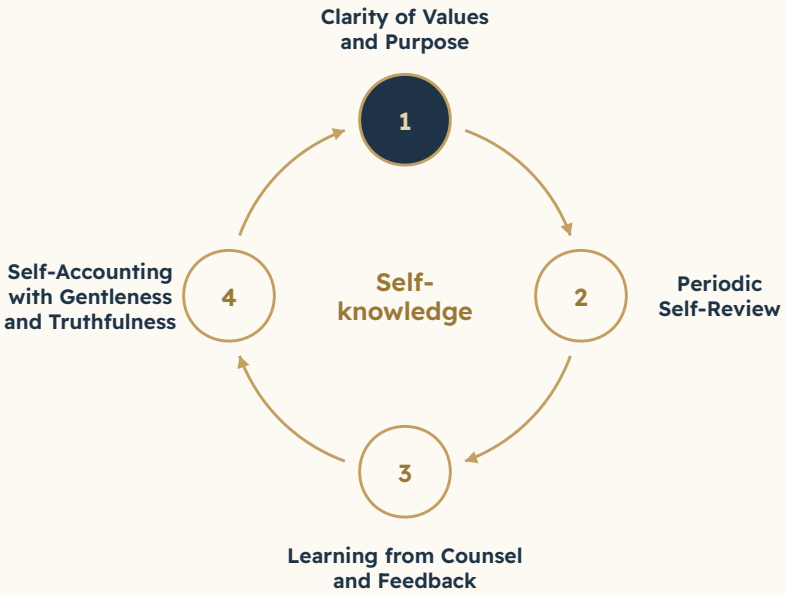
One of the most beautiful forms of self-accounting is to practise it in whispered prayer to God. A person then stands not before the self alone, but before a mercy that opens the door to confession and return. Review is transformed from a hidden burden into supplication and a resolve to put matters right.

Before God, a person mentions the good they have been enabled to do—not to commend the self, but to thank him, recognise the place of his favour, and ask him for steadfastness and purity of intention.

The person then names what they regret in action or omission, seeks forgiveness, and identifies what they can repair or what right they can restore. When a truth or a need for correction becomes clear, the person takes a stance towards it according to their knowledge and capacity. Their repeated response then contributes to what takes root within them over time. Its effect may become settled through constancy, but not through

repetition alone or through steps that must follow a fixed order in every situation.

Return may be sincere before a habit changes or a new action becomes easy. Someone accustomed to haste may begin to listen while anger and the difficulty of restraining it remain. Repentance may be accompanied by remorse; earlier effects may persist; or pain may have other causes. Its persistence alone therefore does not show that repentance is insincere. What matters is what a person chooses and puts right within practical scope, not the immediate disappearance of a feeling.



Self-knowledge is deepened through complementary practices: watchfulness, self-accounting, and seeking counsel

Nor is the human being independent of God's help in this return. In the account of the three who were left behind, after describing their constriction, God says: "*Then he turned*

towards them so that they might repent. God is the Ever-Relenting, the Ever-Merciful" (Q 9:118, excerpt). Al-Mīzān explains this in terms of God's enabling grace preceding their repentance. What is sought is that a person ask God's help and return to truth, not wait for pain to change them or treat a stumble as the end of the road (*al-Mīzān*, vol. 9, commentary on Q 9:117–119).



PART THREE

Growing Our Perfections and Capacities: A Trust of Vicegerency

"God is the Guardian of those who believe; he brings them out of the depths of darkness into the light" (Q 2:257).

Human development requires distinguishing what has actually become a quality of the self from what remains a resource or initial capacity that widens the field of action. Actualised knowledge and understanding, settled will, skill that has become a stable disposition, and realised justice, wisdom, mercy, courage, patience, and truthfulness all enter Actualised Perfection. Wealth, opportunity, office, health, and initial capacity belong to Instrumental Expansion. Both require realistic knowledge, sincere intention, and gradual practice, and direction determines their ethical value; Instrumental Expansion is not nearness in itself.

The self is in motion and is affected by what we choose and repeat, and by the people, ideas, and circumstances among

which we live. Over time, the environment contributes to the whole person's becoming—their knowledge, loves, inclinations, habits, shakila, and direction—but does not inevitably determine who they become. A person is affected, responds, and participates, within practical scope and with divine aid, in what they become. The environment may ease some courses and burden others; in a particular event, it may even narrow the field of choice or remove it altogether. Responsibility is therefore measured by what actually lay within practical scope, not by comparison with others or by what a person could theoretically have achieved: *"The one who purifies it has truly succeeded, and the one who debases it has truly failed"* (Q 91:9–10).

Shakila works as a lens through which a person sees the world, but it remains open to review and correction: *"Say: Each acts according to their shakila"* (Q 17:84).

One person may look at the sea and experience beauty, vastness, and tranquillity, while the imagination moves with the rhythm of the waves.

Another may find it obscure and frightening, its waves summoning memories of loss or danger. The difference is bound to prior experience, interpretation, and meanings rooted in the self.

The emotional associations of a single scene vary with what experience has linked to it. A sunset may stir a sense of constriction in one person because it is bound to a painful memory, and calm and rest in another.

The same applies to many sounds, scents, and places: a response arises not from the stimulus alone, but from the meaning that experience has attached to it. Even so, these meanings remain open to review and relearning.

These patterns affect immediate responses, but they do not determine us conclusively. According to practical scope, and perhaps with help or treatment, a person can pause, test an

interpretation, and choose a course of action different from the one to which they are accustomed.

When clear values, truthful will, and a supportive environment come together, developing virtue and acquiring skill become easier. Strength of will concerns how firmly a person can persist; truthfulness of will concerns the direction in which that persistence is exercised. Strength is not a complete virtue unless it is ordered towards truth. Desire alone, however, does not suffice: virtue becomes rooted through practice and review, while skill grows through training and patience. When a skill becomes a stable disposition of the self, it becomes part of the self's actual strength, while its ethical value remains dependent on direction and use: *"To him ascends the good word, and righteous work raises it"* (Q 35:10).

Repetition may likewise root an unwanted quality when a person yields to habit, but it does not make change impossible. Repentance, learning, changing what can be changed in the environment, and practising differently can all reshape the course, even when this takes time.

Recitation of the Qur'an, supplication, acts of worship, and rulings help set our vision right, train the will, and bind virtues and capacities to servanthood—so that success does not inflate the ego and skill does not become a means of injustice: *"By it God guides those who follow his good pleasure to the ways of peace"* (Q 5:16).

These qualities grow within daily life: in earning a livelihood, learning, family relationships, service to society, and facing difficulty. This world is not peripheral to tazkiya; it is its practical arena, so long as striving remains disciplined by fitra and the revealed law.

Through practice, a person matures, their virtues grow, and they become better able to bear responsibility. The more knowledge and skill are bound to God, the more success becomes a

gateway to thankfulness and service rather than a cause of heedlessness or haughtiness. Responsibility expands with capacity and clarity of guidance, without exceeding practical scope: *"Say: Work—for God will see your work"* (Q 9:105).

This is Tazkiya-Oriented Aspiration: a person cultivates their powers and competences and seeks achievement and impact within servanthood and the Trust, so that Instrumental Expansion serves Growth through Tazkiya rather than replacing it. Detachment is not weakness of capacity, nor is ambition necessarily an inflation of the ego; the criterion is direction, rights, and the way expanded means are used.

Training the will in small matters strengthens it for greater ones. Discipline, keeping one's word, completing work, and patience in learning build a will better able to engage in self-discipline and direct skills and resources in service of the message.

Worship does not mean withdrawal from life. Detachment from this world does not mean abandoning work and good things, but freeing the heart from enslavement to them. Striving, provision, and knowledge therefore belong alongside prayer and fasting; neither replaces the other.

The test is to seek lawful provision, provide generously for one's family according to practical scope, and enjoy what is good without excess—then strive not to let the loss of any of it destroy one's sense of worth or halt one's striving. You possess things without allowing them to possess you.

This balance does not grow in a moment: this world is an arena of practice, choice, and learning. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, said: *"This world is an abode of truthfulness for one who is truthful with it... and an abode of admonition for one who takes admonition from it"* (Nahj al-Balāgha, Wisdom 131).

Professional Work: An Arena of Trust and Service

Professional work is one arena for developing virtues and capacities: decisions, challenges, relationships, and responsibilities recur within it and can become doors to learning and nearness when intention is sound and rights are preserved. It is not the only arena; study, family, voluntary work, craft, and care for others are also arenas.

A career path may offer broad opportunities to develop knowledge and skills, cultivate discipline, trustworthiness, cooperation, and problem-solving skills, and open avenues for serving people and providing for dependants.

The value of work is not measured by position or material indicators alone. The figures may improve while trustworthiness declines, or professional advancement may come at the expense of family, health, and worship. Professional success therefore requires a balance attentive to ethics and the human being's moral and spiritual vocation.

This balance is especially important in contemporary work, which occupies a large share of thought and time and shapes how we see ourselves and others. What we practise every day contributes to our becoming, whether we notice it or not.

Professional work does not carry the same weight in every person's life: stages, circumstances, and roles differ. Yet for many people it occupies a large part of the day and therefore deserves to be chosen and managed with awareness.

A person should therefore plan a career path in light of capacities and circumstances, with regard for family rights, social needs, and the overarching purpose—not salary or status alone. Life is an interlinked chain, and work is one link within it; it must not swallow the others.



PART THREE

Loving Devotion to the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, and Following Their Example

"Say: I ask of you no reward for it except loving devotion to my close kin"

(Q 42:23).

The Ahl al-Bayt hold an exalted place within the Islamic intellectual framework, and the texts emphasise Muslims' bond with them. Alongside the hadith of the two weighty things, cited in the chapter *'The Islamic Revealed Law'*, verses and reports set out their excellence and station, among them God's words: *"God only desires to remove defilement from you, People of the House, and to purify you completely"* (Q 33:33).

Love of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, and of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, is among the great Islamic values that draw a person nearer to God, but it does not end as a feeling in the heart. Sincere loving devotion opens the

way to following the values they embodied and defended, turning the bond with them into a spiritual commitment expressed through fidelity to the divine message.

Human beings are social and emotional by nature and tend to model themselves on those they love and regard as ideals. When we contemplate the lives of the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, and their stances of truthfulness, justice, mercy, firmness, and self-giving, we receive these values consciously and freely and find in them a standard by which to review ourselves and direct our lives.

To the extent that our love for the Greatest Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, and for the pure Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, deepens and we follow their example more faithfully, we draw nearer to God and elevate ourselves. Sunan al-Tirmidhī relates that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him and his family, took the hands of al-Hasan and al-Husayn, peace be upon them, and said: "*Whoever loves me, and loves these two, and their father and their mother, will be with me in my degree on the Day of Resurrection*" (Sunan al-Tirmidhī, no. 3733).

Many texts have pointed to loving devotion to the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them—among them the words of God, exalted is he: "*Say: I ask of you no reward for it except loving devotion to my close kin*" (Q 42:23). This devotion is for the benefit of people themselves: "*Say: Whatever reward I have asked of you is for your own benefit; my reward is with God alone*" (Q 34:47), and it is a way that brings the human being nearer to God: "*Say: I ask of you no reward for it, except that whoever wishes may take a path to their Lord*" (Q 25:57).

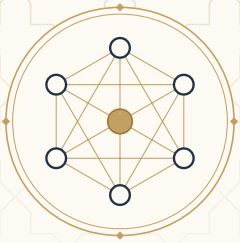
We need to live this loving devotion to the Greatest Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, and to the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, in daily life by following their example and remaining faithful to the values they carried. Love for them is among the clearest manifestations of love for God

because of the guidance, servanthood, and nearness they embodied. Living this love deepens both devotion to them and love of God.

Among the means of embodying this love is constancy in sending blessings upon the Prophet and the Ahl al-Bayt, in worship and outside it. God has made this part of the daily prayer and commanded believers to send blessings upon the Prophet: *"God and his angels send blessings upon the Prophet. O you who believe, send blessings upon him and salute him with peace"* (Q 33:56).

Love also deepens when we recall their lives and stances—in reading, within the family, and in society—not merely to awaken emotion, but to understand the values they embodied and the sacrifices they made. Among the greatest of these stances is Ashura, which embodied faithfulness to the divine message and reform in the face of injustice.

Love is also embodied by visiting their shrines and keeping in mind the values for which they stood and sacrificed, so that the visit becomes a renewal of the pledge and of following their example rather than mere attendance at a place.



PART THREE

Social Bonds

"O people, We created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you might come to know one another; the noblest of you in God's sight is the most mindful of God among you"

(Q 49:13).

Social life is woven into human nature. Each person is born into a family, grows through language, relationships, and cooperation, and does not realise their humanity in isolation. God made people into peoples and tribes so that they might know one another, bound them through lineage and marriage, and distributed provision and capacities among them so that they would need one another as they build their lives.

The importance of social life becomes clear in two complementary dimensions:

1 Tranquillity and Belonging

The human being needs secure relationships and a genuine sense of belonging. Love, companionship, and bonds of kinship provide psychological and social support and open a field of

giving and receiving. Yet security does not arise from the number of relationships alone, but from their quality and their connection to values and direction.

Some contemporary psychological theories, such as self-determination theory (SDT), observe that a sense of belonging is among the basic needs that affect motivation and well-being. This is a useful diagnostic observation; but it does not exhaust the Islamic meaning of relationship as a trust and an arena of worship.

In this context, Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Kinship ties and good neighbourliness cause homes to flourish and prolong lives*." This meaning is affirmed by many texts concerning the effects of kinship and dutifulness, showing that relationships are no marginal matter in religion (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, the chapter on the bonds of kinship, no. 14).

The findings of the Harvard Study of Adult Development, a long-running longitudinal study, likewise point to the connection between good relationships, health, and satisfaction with life. This illustrates the effect of human connection; it does not by itself establish the purpose of existence (Robert Waldinger and Marc Schulz, The Good Life).

2 An Arena of Action and Tazkiya

Social life is an arena in which a person puts capacities and virtues into practice, learning patience, faithfulness, mercy, cooperation, and the resolution of disagreements. Through it, values become conduct and the journey towards God becomes present in the way people are treated.

Islam therefore calls for a society marked by love, cooperation, brotherhood, and mutual support, in which barriers that isolate people from one another are reduced. The Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, likened believers in their

mutual loving devotion and mercy to a single body; and God, exalted is he, says: *"Hold fast together to the rope of God, and do not be divided"* (Q 3:103).

Islam has prescribed acts of worship and rulings that strengthen social bonds. Congregational prayer, Friday prayer, pilgrimage, almsgiving, and fasting do not shape the individual alone; they also gather people around the remembrance of God, mutual support, and shared responsibility.

It has stressed, too, the right of the neighbour, the bonds of kinship, dutifulness to parents, and maintaining friendships and visiting one another. These relationships need continuous care: neglect scatters what good intention builds, and faithfulness shows in daily details, not in slogans.

Islam also established rules that safeguard relationships: it forbade pride, envy, talebearing, slander, backbiting, abuse, name-calling, harming people, and divulging their secrets. God, exalted is he, says: *"Let no people mock another; they may be better than them"* (Q 49:11).



PART THREE

Reform

"I desire only reform, as far as I am able. My success comes only from God; upon him I rely, and to him I turn"

(Q 11:88).

A believer's soundness remains incomplete if they withdraw into themselves: Surat al-ʿAṣr binds deliverance to faith, righteous work, and mutual counsel to truth and patience. Reform does not mean controlling people; it means carrying goodness to them and helping them towards it with wisdom and according to capacity.

God swore by time and gathered in a short surah the roots of individual and social deliverance—to make clear that faith that produces no action and no mutual counsel remains deficient in its effect.

A person guided by a moral and spiritual vocation moves beyond the narrowness of the ego towards concern for the common good: enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and serving people. Bearing responsibility for reform cultivates the very virtues a person calls others to—provided

they begin with the self and do not make reform a screen for haughtiness.

We therefore do not stop at the bounds of the self; we practise reform within the circles where we exert real influence—in the self, family, work, and society—and then in wider human concerns, according to practical scope, position, and responsibility.

Allegiance and Disavowal

Not everything that appears positive accords with truth and fitra: an idea may raise the slogan of freedom while opening the door to injustice, or the slogan of success while enslaving the human being to image and wealth. Reform therefore requires a criterion that distinguishes genuine goodness from an attractive façade.

A person cannot isolate themselves from every negative influence in a mixed world, but they can choose what to approach, what to refuse, whose company to keep, and what to allow to direct the heart and action. The aim is to build insight, not to manufacture an impossible, sterilised environment.

In this light, allegiance and disavowal (*tawalli and tabarri*) are understood as a conscious stance: allegiance to God, to his Messenger, to his friends, and to the values of truth and justice; and disavowal of injustice, corruption, and aggression. They do not mean blind emotion, but a love of goodness and a refusal of falsehood that show in choice and work.

Reform becomes less effective or goes astray, at either the individual or social level, when it does not spring from truthfulness and sincerity in the reformer's heart: a means that corrupts the heart cannot build genuine reform.

Islam does not seek scattered individuals who practise reform incidentally, but a community that carries reform as part of its identity: *"Let there be from among you a community calling to goodness, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is*

wrong" (Q 3:104). Allegiance roots loyalty to truth and its symbols; disavowal roots refusal of injustice and corruption, even when they proceed from someone close.

Disavowal means that a believer gives no allegiance or support to aggression and falsehood and does not participate in them. It is a stance against injustice—not a licence to assault those who differ or diminish their dignity.

For this reason, the Qur'an commanded kindness and equity towards those who have neither fought the Muslims nor driven them from their homes, even if they differ from them in religion, and forbade allegiance to those who took part in aggression: *"God does not forbid you, regarding those who have not fought you over religion nor driven you from your homes, that you treat them kindly and deal equitably with them; God loves the equitable"* (Q 60:8).

Many texts affirm devoted allegiance to the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, and disavowal of their enemies. Among them is the report that the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, said to Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn, peace be upon them: "*I am at war with whoever wars against you, and at peace with whoever is at peace with you*" (Sunan al-Tirmidhī, no. 3870). This allegiance is read as a continuation of championing the truth they embodied—not as sectarian polemic severed from ethics.

Enjoining What Is Right and Forbidding What Is Wrong

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is a social responsibility that keeps values present and prevents corruption from becoming normal. Its effectiveness comes not from harsh surveillance, but from wisdom, example, a gradual approach, and regard for capacity and consequences, while judgement itself remains grounded in the revealed law and

truth: *"Let there be from among you a community calling to goodness"* (Q 3:104).

The texts stress the danger of abandoning this responsibility until society becomes accustomed to injustice. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have warned that this may lead to the domination of the wicked and deprive people of the blessing of supplication (Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 47).

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong stood at the heart of the rising of Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, who declared that he had gone forth to seek reform in the community of his grandfather. It is likewise among the meanings of actively awaiting Imam al-Mahdi, may God hasten his relief: setting right what lies within one's capacity rather than deferring responsibility to the future.

Enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong is neither a violent practice nor a means of humiliating people. It is a culture of mercy and desire for goodness, disciplined by wisdom and gracious counsel: *"It was by a mercy from God that you were gentle with them"* (Q 3:159), and *"Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and gracious counsel"* (Q 16:125).



PART THREE

Giving and Preferring Others

"They give others preference over themselves, even when they are in need; those protected from their own self's greed are the ones who prosper"

(Q 59:9).

Meeting needs and developing perfections and capacities are legitimate, but they can become self-centred when separated from purpose. God therefore trains the human being in giving and preferring others so that the self does not become a veil separating the person from God and from other people.

Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Meeting the need of a believing person is more beloved to God than twenty pilgrimages, on each of which the pilgrim spends one hundred thousand.*" The intent is to show the high station of serving people—not to diminish pilgrimage or worship (al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, the chapter on meeting the need of a believer, no. 4).

Worship is not measured by duration alone. Meeting a person's need may take only minutes, yet embody truthfulness and

mercy and have far-reaching effects; it may therefore carry great weight with God according to intention and need.

Giving, spending, and preferring others purify the individual and help build society. They free the heart from the narrowness of the ego and bind it to God through service to his creation: *"Spend; it is better for yourselves. Those protected from their own self's greed are the ones who prosper"* (Q 64:16).

In contemporary life, trustworthy charitable institutions and transfer mechanisms provide effective channels for delivering wealth to those entitled to it and organising one's giving—a favour that supports continuity and transparency.

Yet ease of transfer may distance giving from awareness of the need and of the human being who receives the charity. The giver therefore needs to preserve presence of heart and the beneficiary's dignity, even when giving passes through an intermediary.

It is fitting to connect supplication and thankfulness with giving: when a person asks God for relief or thanks him for a favour, they set aside for others a share of what has been provided—without turning charity into a transaction by which the result is bought.

A regular commitment to a needy family or a trustworthy project may help turn charity from a passing response into a continuing responsibility—while preserving people's privacy and dignity, and not causing them embarrassment.

When a challenge or hardship arises, a person can join supplication, the use of available means, and charity. They remember that their own need does not isolate them from the needs of others, and that the relief they seek for themselves calls them to become a means of relief for someone else.

Likewise, a person may express thankfulness for good news through giving suited to practical scope. The worth of charity is

not measured by the size of the sum alone: God does not burden any self beyond its capacity.

The purpose is to connect life's joys and challenges with God and with service to people, so that the heart is trained in gratitude and mercy and avarice is weakened—even when no rapid change is felt.

Some forms of giving require no wealth yet may have a profound effect—among them, a good word. The Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, says: "*A good word is charity*" (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī, no. 2989; Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim, no. 1009).

In a world where many people experience pressure, loneliness, and fear, a truthful word from a merciful heart may become a source of relief and strength, without claiming to solve the whole problem.

A good word may not change circumstances directly, but it gives the hearer a sense of being seen and supported and may open a new way of understanding the situation and acting on it: *"a good word is like a good tree: its root is firm, and its branches reach into the sky"* (Q 14:24).

A person with expertise in a field that meets people's needs can give part of their time and knowledge in charity, especially to those unable to afford the service. When this giving is connected to an institution, mosque, or trustworthy initiative, it is more likely to continue and preserve rights.

Among the hardest forms of the good word is repelling an evil deed with a good one: when someone wrongs you, do not allow the wrong to define your character; choose what is better while preserving your rights and boundaries—*"and they repel evil with good"* (Q 13:22).

This trains the self to move beyond the grip of selfishness and avarice, so that it journeys towards God with a greater capacity

for forgiveness, justice, and mercy rather than remaining captive to reaction.

God has described the one able to do this as a possessor of tremendous fortune: *"None are granted it but those who are patient; none are granted it but one of tremendous fortune"* (Q 41:35).





PART THREE

Conceit and Self-Confidence

"And when you have resolved, rely upon God; God loves those who rely upon him" (Q 3:159).

As you move towards perfection, some virtues may become actual within you through God's bounty and through the contributions of fitra, upbringing, environment, and striving. Others may notice and praise you. Praise can open the door to boastfulness and self-satisfaction, and conceit and vanity may then enter the heart unless a person remembers the source of the blessing and the responsibility it carries.

Conceit, vanity, and an inflated ego are closely intertwined and are among the human being's most dangerous enemies. They corrupt a person's view of the self and of others and destroy much good in this world and the next. God therefore forbade them: *"Do not turn your cheek away from people in scorn, nor walk the earth exultantly; God loves no swaggering boaster"* (Q 31:18).

Conceit corrupts a person's understanding of divine favour: the bounty is ascribed to the self as independent, while aid, circumstances, and the rights of others are forgotten. The Islamic way therefore teaches us to find glory in servanthood to God. Consider the Whispered Prayer of Imam Ali, peace be upon him: "*My God, it is glory enough for me that I am your servant, and pride enough for me that you are my Lord*" (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 20, among the sayings ascribed to the Commander of the Faithful).

Yet awareness of one's achievements and merits is not necessarily conceit. A person may recognise the resources and initial capacities they possess—such as health, opportunity, and native intelligence—as well as the knowledge, understanding, will, and stable skill actualised within the self, and the wisdom, justice, and mercy realised within it. A person needs to know what they can and cannot do and to base plans on a realistic assessment of strengths and limits. The question is not whether we know what we have been given, but how we understand it, towards what end we use it, and upon whom the heart relies when acting.

The phrase "*self-confidence*" bears two meanings. If it means a person's objective knowledge of the resources and initial capacities God has placed within them, and of the knowledge, experience, will, stable dispositions, and virtues actualised within the self—together with awareness of limits and weaknesses—then it is knowledge necessary for action and responsibility. If it means reliance on the self as the source of strength and guarantor of the outcome, it is an illusion that opens the door to vanity and conceit.

Knowing one's capacity does not mean guaranteeing the result: the human being is one factor within a broad web of causes, circumstances, and wills, and many factors may move in a different direction. Self-knowledge supports sound planning and helps a person do all that lies within their practical scope; it does not grant control over the outcome.

Believing that one's capacities alone are sufficient to realise one's ambitions—while ignoring the limits of the self and the influence of other factors—is conceit and illusion. *"I do not absolve my own self; the self is ever inciting to evil, except where my Lord has mercy"* (Q 12:53). The Greatest Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, is reported to have said: "My God, *do not leave me to myself even for the blink of an eye*" (al-Ḥurr al-ʿĀmilī, Wasāʾil al-Shīʿa, vol. 19, p. 261). In this light we understand the saying of Imam Ali, peace be upon him: "*Confidence in the self is among Satan's surest opportunities*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam, no. 4733)—that is, when confidence becomes independent reliance upon the ego.

The balanced road is to assess capacities, virtues, and limits honestly, use the available means with firmness and courage, and place the heart's trust in God alone—so that hesitation does not disable action, conceit does not deceive, and the person does not suppose that they control outcomes.

The meaning can be clarified through five points. Together, they distinguish knowledge of the powers and perfections actualised within the self, and of the resources and capacities that widen the field of action, from trust in God, conceit, and humility.

First: objective knowledge is the foundation of movement. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, says to Kumayl: "*There is no action for which you do not need knowledge*" (Tuḥaf al-ʿUqūl). Movement begins with objective knowledge, not ignorance or illusion. We therefore need to know our resources and initial capacities, the knowledge, will, stable dispositions, and virtues actualised within us, and the favours God has granted us—without exaggeration or understatement—so that we can build upon them in planning and action: *"As for the favour of your Lord, proclaim it"* (Q 93:11).

We also need to know our weaknesses, the opportunities before us, and the challenges in the way, and to identify the goal before choosing the means. Such knowledge does not magnify the self; it is a condition of insight and prudent action.

Second: knowing one's capacities does not guarantee the result. Knowledge of our strengths, coupled with efforts to develop them, increases, within the regularities God has created, the likelihood of reaching our goals, but it cannot ensure their realisation. We are one factor among many, and other factors and forces may move in a different direction.

All causes subsist by God's will: they do not stand alone in producing results, nor do they pass outside his possession. Although the human being is commanded to employ the means diligently, the outcome remains with God: *"His command, when he wills a thing, is only to say to it, 'Be,' and it is"* (Q 36:82). God, exalted is he, also says: *"O people, a parable is set forth, so listen to it: those you call upon apart from God will never create even a fly, though they join together to do so; and if a fly snatches something from them, they cannot recover it. Feeble are the seeker and the sought"* (Q 22:73).

Third: reliance upon God and trust in him. The journey towards God comes together when a person develops the resources and capacities God has placed at their disposal and the powers and perfections actualised within the self, directs them sincerely towards truth, and remains aware of servanthood and ontological dependence on him: *"O people, you are the ones in need of God; and God—he is the Self-Sufficient, the Praiseworthy"* (Q 35:15).

While God calls the human being to develop powers and perfections and to use resources and capacities well through kadh and the use of available means, he also commands reliance upon him alone: *"Take no guardian apart from Me"* (Q 17:2). Knowledge of capacity is thus joined to the

heart's servanthood, without suspending the means or treating them as independent.

A person does not set the heart upon the self or upon worldly means, but leans upon God and relies upon him alone: *"Whoever desires the reward of this world—with God is the reward of this world and of the hereafter; and God is ever Hearing, Seeing"* (Q 4:134). This does not annul effort or the use of means. The Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, is reported to have said: "*Tie it, and rely upon God*" (Sunan al-Tirmidhī, no. 2517). God is the One who gives causes their efficacy, powerful over all things: *"Say: Nothing will befall us except what God has decreed for us; he is our Protector. Let the believers rely upon God"* (Q 9:51).

We must trust in God and never lose hope in his guidance, help, and mercy, even when we face trial or hardship. However tangled the road becomes, we do not lose trust in him, for he—glorified and exalted—*"has written mercy upon himself"* (Q 6:12).

This trust and reliance are sources of strength, tranquillity, and glory for the heart. Consider the tranquillity of God's prophet Moses, peace be upon him, when he and his people were hemmed in between Pharaoh's soldiers and the sea. His people said: *"We are surely overtaken!"* (Q 26:61), and he answered: *"No—my Lord is with me; he will guide me"* (Q 26:62). Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*The root of the heart's strength is reliance upon God*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam, no. 3082).

Trust in God grants the believer glory and strength to face challenges without despair, while they accept the decree and use the available means: *"Do not lose heart or grieve; you will have the upper hand if you are believers"* (Q 3:139), and *"All glory belongs to God, his Messenger, and the believers"* (Q 63:8).

The believer's sense of dignity and trust in God does not arise from believing that God will realise every worldly aim, but from certainty that God's governance is never devoid of wisdom and

mercy—while recognising that a person cannot identify the specific good in every event. Al-Zahra, peace be upon her, is reported to have said: "*Whoever sends up to God unalloyed worship, God, glorified and exalted, sends down the best of what benefits that person*" (Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd, Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, vol. 16, p. 211).

Fourth: humility before God. Humility does not require you to deny the resources and initial capacities God has placed within you, the knowledge, will, stable dispositions, and virtues realised within the self, or the favours he has given you. It requires you to know their source and the responsibility they carry, and not to become haughty because of them. Heredity and upbringing may provide a degree of preparedness that makes some powers easier to realise or widens some capacities, but they do not confer complete virtue. Everything a person has been given is a Trust, and the duty to fulfil it is determined by the truth they have known and by their practical scope. Imam Ali, peace be upon him, is reported to have said: "*Everything has its alms; the alms of the intellect is to bear patiently with the ignorant*" (Ghurar al-Ḥikam wa-Durar al-Kalim).

If you fall short or grow lax in fulfilling what these blessings require, you fall short in one aspect of servanthood to God. Awareness of responsibility and fear of shortfall foster humility and move a person towards greater striving, deeper nearness to God, and gratitude for his blessings: "*If you give thanks, I will surely give you more*" (Q 14:7). Consider the Supplication for Noble Character of Imam al-Sajjād, peace be upon him: "*My God, raise me not one degree among people without lowering me its like in my own eyes; and bring about for me no outward glory without bringing about for me an inward lowliness in my own eyes in its measure*" (al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya, Supplication 20).

However far we advance in faith, we fall short of rendering God the full due of servanthood and gratitude for his tremendous favours—though in his gracious care and mercy he accepts

the little from us. Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, says in the Supplication of Arafa: *"Were I to attempt and strive, through the ages and epochs—were I given them to live—to discharge thanks for a single one of your favours, I could not do it, save by your grace, which itself makes binding upon me thanks to you ever renewed, and praise fresh and ready to offer"* (the Supplication of Arafa, in Iqbāl al-Aʿmāl).

With this understanding, knowledge of one's merits and virtues does not become pride or conceit, but humility, awe, and a sense of responsibility. Consider the Whispered Prayer of Imam Zayn al-Abidin, peace be upon him: *"My God, to you I complain of a self ever inciting to evil, rushing to fault, addicted to disobeying you, exposing itself to your displeasure…"* (al-Ṣaḥīfa al-Sajjādiyya, the Whispered Prayer of the Complainers).

Fifth: humility before people. Humility means not considering yourself superior to others because of a perfection or power actualised within you, or because of a resource, knowledge, or work you have been given; nor should you reduce another person to a deficiency that appears to you. You may recognise superiority in one respect, but you do not encompass another person's beginnings, circumstances, or striving. Judgement of hearts and spiritual stations belongs to God.

The criterion the Qur'an names for nobility is mindfulness of God: *"The noblest of you in God's sight is the most mindful of God among you"* (Q 49:13). Favours, capacities, and talents are not decisive proof of their bearer's station, for God extends his bounty to all people: *"We extend Our aid to all—to these and those—from your Lord's bounty"* (Q 17:20).

Mindfulness of God appears in practice through truthfulness of intention, earnest effort, and fulfilment of rights—not through outward appearance alone. A person should therefore not claim a high station merely because of abundant achievement.

You may know that you have more knowledge or experience than another person, or that you give more than they do, but you do not know the measure of that person's striving within their circumstances, the hidden workings of intention, or what lies between them and God. A deed small in appearance may arise from tremendous truthfulness, while hidden vanity may corrupt a great work. Hence God, exalted is he, says of people who wondered at the absence of those they had counted among the wicked: "*Did we take them in mockery, or have our eyes failed to see them?*" (Q 38:63).





PART THREE

Acts of Worship

"They were commanded only to worship God with sincere devotion to him, inclining to truth; to establish prayer and give alms. That is the upright religion"

(Q 98:5).

The details of worship and its rulings belong in books of jurisprudence and authoritative legal opinions. This chapter does not set out those details; it clarifies the place of worship in human becoming and in the journey towards God.

Muslims agree on the foundations of prayer, fasting, almsgiving, pilgrimage, and the other obligations, while juristic differences exist over some details of performance. Such differences belong to the field of ijtihad and recourse to qualified specialists; they do not prevent us from understanding the shared function of worship.

Servanthood is the consciously chosen orientation in which God is the human being's Lord, highest reference, and ultimate purpose; worship is its intentional and practical embodiment. Worship has a specific sense in the rites, with their prescribed forms and the intention of drawing near to God, and a general

sense in lawful work when intention, purpose, and means are sound and rights are preserved. Servanthood is therefore not equated with rites alone, and not every permitted act becomes worship automatically.

Acts of worship—including prayer, recitation, supplication, pilgrimage, fasting, and almsgiving—are among the most important supports of the revealed law. They renew the human being's bond with God and bind the day, instincts, and relationships to the direction of servanthood: *"I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship Me"* (Q 51:56).

Worship is first a right owed to God and obedience to him. Its underlying wisdom and effects include the purification, cultivation, and reordering of the self. It is therefore not reduced to psychological or social benefit, nor are such effects what confer legitimacy upon it.

Worship contributes to human becoming in two complementary ways.

First, it renews the response to truth and servanthood and returns the heart to God, strengthening the will and weakening surrender to craving and anger. This is what the verse indicates: *"Establish prayer; prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing"* (Q 29:45).

Second, worship is embodied. It issues from the one self through intention and faith and takes bodily form through prescribed practice, stirring understanding, love, fear, hope, mercy, and giving. No inward state removes the need for obedience, and outward performance alone does not establish the perfection of the inward state. Values therefore do not remain ideas detached from practice, and the effect of worship returns to the self without becoming mechanical.

When a person engages consciously with worship, its meanings take root within the self and shape the person's way of seeing and acting: fasting trains the will, almsgiving cultivates

generosity, pilgrimage cultivates unity, and prayer restores direction towards God.

This effect differs according to presence and sincerity, not according to the form alone. God said of the sacrificial offering: *"Their flesh does not reach God, nor their blood; what reaches him is your mindfulness of God"* (Q 22:37).

Rooting Servanthood to God in the Inner Life

The question posed in the chapter 'What Does Nearness to God Mean?' now returns: how does servanthood take root in practical life, and how do the virtues consistent with it grow?

We do not need to invent the road from nothing. God has prescribed acts of worship that preserve the bond with him and support tranquillity and uprightness. What is needed is attention to their meaning rather than performance of their outward forms alone.

Two levels of practice can be distinguished.

The first level is the obligatory acts: prayer, fasting, and the other duties. They establish the root of the bond with God and set a firm minimum without which the life of faith cannot remain upright. Their effect deepens as a person performs them with awareness and presence.

The one who prays is not asked to attain the reverent humility of God's friends all at once, but to begin with a simple act of recollection: being before God, receiving God's call, and recognising that the words of the prayer carry a meaning addressed to the worshipper.

A person can open the heart to the love of God without strain or manufactured emotion, remembering his mercy and favour and allowing love to grow through knowledge and constancy.

A person speaks to God from the heart—before prayer, after it, and in prostration—for God hears and sees them. Supplication needs no contrived language in order to be sincere.

When presence of heart weakens, a person should not react harshly, but proceed gently and gradually. Reverent humility grows through practice, whereas harshness may turn worship into a burden.

The mind will wander again and again towards worldly concerns; this is part of human experience. When the person praying notices, they return gently to recitation and remembrance, without despair or harsh self-reproach. Unchosen wandering is not the same as heedlessness that a person knowingly embraces; what matters is the stance taken upon remembering.

During prayer, a thought about work or a problem may occur. It need not immediately be ascribed to inspiration or whispering; it is enough to notice it, defer dealing with it, and return to prayer.

After prayer, a person may write down what deserves follow-up and thank God for any understanding gained—without making the mind's wandering a virtue or a pretext for abandoning presence.

Concerns may crowd in as prayer begins, and a person may hurry. It helps to give prayer its due time and set aside tasks as far as possible until it is complete: "*Let not your wealth nor your children divert you from the remembrance of God*" (Q 63:9).

Give prayer the time it deserves, avoiding both artificial slowness and haste that empties it of meaning. What is sought is presence of heart together with worship performed as it should be.

Every act of worship should likewise be performed with reflection and calm until its effect appears in conduct. The One who prescribed it is the Creator of the human being and knows what makes the human being sound; he has told us that prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing.

The second level is the supererogatory acts. Recommended acts of worship and remembrance, such as the night prayer

and additional charity, open wider doors for those who have the time and capacity for more. They are not a field for boasting, but means of strengthening the bond with God.

No one can perform every supererogatory act found in the tradition, nor is that required. A person chooses what accords with practical scope, circumstances, and duties, while preserving balance—so that no supererogatory act displaces an obligation or a binding right.





PART THREE

Reading the Noble Qur'an

"Had We sent down this Qur'an upon a mountain, you would have seen it humbled and split apart in awe of God. These parables We set forth for people, so that they may reflect"

(Q 59:21).

The Noble Qur'an is the primary source of the revealed law and of guidance. God sent it down to the Messenger Muhammad, peace be upon him and his family, and made it a blessed source of guidance and mercy for believers: *"And this is a Book We have sent down, blessed—so follow it"* (Q 6:155).

It is the Messenger's immortal miracle, preserved from change and distortion; the Qur'an in our hands is the very Book sent down upon the Prophet: *"It is We who sent down the Remembrance, and We will surely preserve it"* (Q 15:9).

Regular, attentive reading helps the self absorb the Qur'an's concepts and culture and joins knowledge to servanthood. A person reads in obedience to God and receives from the verses a standard by which to reconsider the self and its work.

At a time when life accelerates and pressures multiply, the human being needs a reference that reorders vision before offering partial solutions. The Qur'an is guidance and healing for what lies within the breasts; it teaches the human being how to understand the self, the world, and destiny: *"We send down in the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers"* (Q 17:82).

The challenge is not that the Qur'an is absent from our homes, but that we sometimes read it without reflection or connection to life. We may seek an understanding of the human being and the paths to success from many sources while leaving the Qur'anic standard outside our inquiry.

This does not mean rejecting reliable scientific findings or useful human experience within their proper fields. Specialised sciences study specific mechanisms in the self, conduct, body, and society and can assist diagnosis and the development of tools. They do not, however, establish the roots of faith or the purpose of existence on their own, just as the religious model does not replace science in explaining specific mechanisms.

The Qur'an is the reference that sets the direction of knowledge right and clarifies the truths upon which faith, ethics, and destiny rest. A reliable scientific finding is accepted for what it establishes within its field; the philosophical and value-laden interpretations of the human being and purpose offered by schools of thought are reviewed in the light of truth, fitra, and servanthood and are not equated with the scientific finding itself.

The Qur'an's description of itself as healing and mercy does not make it a substitute for medicine or specialised treatment. It heals illnesses of the heart, belief, and direction, and grants meaning that helps a person bear pain and use the appropriate means. Its effect appears when it is understood and followed—not through its mere presence on a shelf.

In the Qur'an is the guidance humanity needs to know its Creator, its purpose, and the standard for judging good and evil; and the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, made its meanings clear and embodied them in his life, bearing glad tidings to those who responded and warning those who turned away: *"With the truth We sent it down, and with the truth it descended"* (Q 17:105).

Hence the human being needs regular companionship with the Qur'an, even in a small measure—reading it reflectively and asking: what does this verse reveal about God, the human being, and life? And what does it call me to review in my work?

The worth of reading does not rest on the number of pages: two verses read with attentive presence may penetrate more deeply than pages that pass without attention. A person chooses a time when the mind is calmer, such as the morning or after prayer.

When reading is not possible, attentive listening can still help—while travelling safely or during a free moment—provided it does not come at the expense of the attention required by work or driving.

Attention is a skill that grows: when the mind wanders, the reader returns it gently to the verse, and tries to understand one word or one meaning, instead of turning the wandering into a reason for leaving the Qur'an.

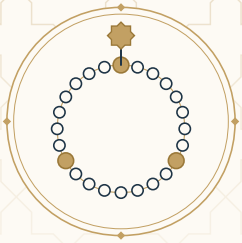
A person reads the Qur'an by turning towards it, contemplating its meanings, affirming its truth, and remaining ready to correct their understanding and conduct. Humility before revelation does not annul the intellect; it calls the intellect to listen, verify, and return to commentary.

If a conflict seems to appear between a verse and experience, the reader should not rush to dismiss the text as false or to deny reality, but reconsider their understanding, the verse's context, and scholarly explanations. The words of God, exalted is he

—*"Call upon Me; I will answer you"* (Q 40:60)—are true; understanding the forms and times of response requires gathering the relevant texts and considering God's wisdom.

The senses may deceive a person as a mirage does, but this does not close the door to questioning. Trust in God moves us towards more honest inquiry: we remain certain that revelation is true, then expend our effort to understand it—without obstinacy and without a simplification that impairs its meaning.

Trustworthy commentaries assist this understanding. The reader chooses one suited to their level and returns to it when a verse raises a question, without scattering attention across applications and sources whose methods remain unknown.



PART THREE

Remembering God Often

"O you who believe, remember God often, and glorify him morning and evening"

(Q 33:41–42).

Life's difficulties do not distinguish between believers and others. Work, family, illness, and fear may occupy the mind until a person is present in prayer with the body but absent with the heart—although the acting self is one—or reads the Qur'an without attending to its words.

Some suppose that the road to remembrance is withdrawal from society and the shedding of every responsibility. Seclusion may be beneficial within limits; but it is no substitute for family, work, and the service of people.

At the other extreme, many of us become so immersed in earning a livelihood and managing life's concerns that little time remains for the self, family, and worship. A person may fulfil the duty while the mind wanders—not from lack of desire for God, but because pressure consumes their attention.

When a person tries to recover balance, they may find themselves caught in habits, schedules, and relationships that are

difficult to change all at once, and may discover that some conceptions of success and necessity intensify the very restrictions under which they live.

The price of this imbalance may be seen in strain, exhaustion, and weakened relationships and worship. Work pressure, illness, or the mind's unchosen wandering does not mean that a person has turned away from God. Turning away here means leaving his guidance and persisting in a direction that diverts from truth, not merely the fatigue that weighs upon a person.

God, exalted is he, says: *"Whoever turns away from My remembrance will have a constricted life, and We shall gather him, blind, on the Day of Resurrection"* (Q 20:124). Al-Mīzān and al-Amthal explain one aspect of this constriction in life: a person's possessions may increase while the heart remains constricted by them, fearing their loss, seeking more, and finding no tranquillity in what is already held. The problem is not wealth, work, or love of family, but an attachment that takes possession of the heart until what we look to for security becomes a renewed source of fear and craving (al-Mīzān, vol. 14, and al-Amthal, commentaries on Q 20:123–127).

This meaning is supported by God's words in the context of the hypocrites: *"Let neither their wealth nor their children impress you. God desires only to punish them through these in the life of this world, and that their souls should depart while they are unbelievers"* (Q 9:55). Al-Mīzān explains how a person may be tormented through attachment to what they see as the source of happiness. This is not a judgement on everyone who has wealth or a family, nor proof that suffering through attachment will necessarily lead to repentance. The distinction between an alert to return and istidraj has already been explained in the chapter on affliction (al-Mīzān, vol. 9, commentary on Q 9:55).

This is part of what we mean by the constriction of turning away, not an explanation of every psychological or bodily pain. Remembrance restores things to their proper places and helps the heart not to make them its highest purpose; it does not replace work, treatment, or support. Return may be sincere while hardship or earlier effects remain, just as discomfort may disappear through self-justification without the course being corrected.

What, then, is the path to a remembrance that accompanies a person without cutting them off from reality?

The path is to become accustomed to the bond with God while living among people and amid ordinary life: working earnestly, using the available means, rejoicing and grieving, yet returning the heart to God whenever concerns carry it away. Tranquillity does not mean indifference to results; it means that outcomes do not dislodge the self from its true reference: *"Surely hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God"* (Q 13:28).

The aim is clear, but it needs simple and repeated practice if it is to move from an idea into a living presence.

How, then, does a person unite work in a crowded world with an inner bond with God that grants tranquillity?

Remembrance is not confined to repeating God's name with the tongue, though verbal remembrance is a great gateway. It is the presence of God—his names, signs, command, promise, and the purpose of servanthood—in the awareness and heart of the self: a presence that affects understanding, appraisal, love, intention, choice, and action.

Imam al-Sadiq, peace be upon him, affirms this practical meaning: "*Among the most demanding things God has made obligatory upon his creation is remembering God often.*" He then says: "*I do not mean saying 'Glory be to God', 'Praise belongs to God', 'There is no god but God', and 'God is greater'—although this is part*

of it—but remembering God in what he has made lawful and unlawful: if it is an act of obedience, the person performs it; if it is an act of disobedience, the person leaves it." The report does not deny verbal remembrance. It shows that the presence of God should be reflected in a person's choices. Here remembrance meets faithfulness to the pledge and Inner Truthfulness: a person acts upon what has become clear, rather than allowing knowledge to remain distant from action (al-Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, vol. 2, Book of Faith and Unbelief, "Avoiding Prohibitions", no. 4).

Remember that God is your Lord and Owner, the Owner of every atom in the universe; nothing hidden escapes him, and when he wills a thing, his command is only to say to it, "*Be*," and it is.

Remember that you are his servant and creature, embraced by his gracious care, and that whatever befalls you does not pass outside his knowledge and wisdom—even when you do not grasp the specific good in every event.

Remember that the way is open for you to speak to him: you can call upon him and pour out your innermost thoughts to him, and he hears you; you can ask his help, and he helps as he wills—with no intermediary to veil you from him.

Keeping these truths present corrects the conceptions that inflate fear or foster the illusion of independence, and it reorders the heart around God. The more deeply they take root, the greater a person's share of tranquillity—while the need for work, treatment, and support in adversity remains.

Amid the day's frustrations, successes, and surprises, a person needs someone to whom they can pour out what lies within. They may not always find another person who hears or understands, but nothing is absent from God.

Let a person become accustomed to whispering to God what troubles and gladdens them, and to taking refuge in him

without strain: *"Remember God as you remember your forefathers —or with even greater remembrance"* (Q 2:200).

Amid a crowded schedule, short moments remain between tasks: while walking, waiting, or moving from place to place. These intervals can turn into remembrance and supplication, without suspending duty or scattering the attention that safety requires.

Remembrance need not take long on every occasion: it may be a minute in which a person reviews the heart, seeks forgiveness sincerely, or asks for help. Repeated return keeps concerns from becoming the whole world.

At first, this may feel awkward because a person is accustomed to transmitted supplications in their established wording and less accustomed to addressing God in everyday language. With practice, the awkwardness passes, while the transmitted supplications remain a school that teaches how to supplicate.

This connection may bring strength and tranquillity to the heart in proportion to its truthfulness. A person learns reliance upon God, finds a quiet sweetness in whispered prayer, and allows love of God to take root within the inner life: *"Surely hearts find tranquillity in the remembrance of God"* (Q 13:28).

Living with awareness of God and keeping him as one's point of reference lifts a person's gaze beyond many small things that drain people. It becomes less important to win every argument or possess everything over which others compete, because the heart is bound to a greater purpose.

This wider horizon gives rise to tranquillity and gravity—not as permanent, unchanging feelings, but as manifestations of a stability that enables the self to return to its true reference after disturbance and to bear pain without allowing it to swallow meaning.

When denial, mockery, or loneliness presses hard, remembrance opens a door to patience and renewed action. In moments of constriction, the Qur'an directed the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, to glorify God: *"Be patient with what they say, and glorify your Lord with praise before sunrise and before sunset"* (Q 20:130).



PART THREE

Supplication

"Ask God of his bounty; God has full knowledge of all things"

(Q 4:32).

Life may toss us about until we feel as though we were in a small boat amid high waves. We possess some power to choose and act, but we neither encompass every cause nor guarantee results. Here the human being's dependence on God becomes clear, without capacity or responsibility being annulled.

Our knowledge, too, is limited: we may press for something we suppose to be good while it may bring us harm, or hate something in which lies a benefit we do not see: *"The human being prays for evil as readily as for good; the human being is ever hasty"* (Q 17:11), and *"God knows, and you do not know"* (Q 2:216).

The purpose of life is not merely to obtain the most pleasant possible worldly circumstances, but to journey towards God and discharge our Trust within it. Along the way, we may waver between competing benefits or be unable to see the outcome; we therefore need guidance as surely as we need capacity.

God's gracious care does not leave the human being alone in facing this responsibility: he has guided humanity through revelation and the intellect, opened the doors of supplication and seeking help, and established means through which people act in the world: *"Does the human being suppose that he will be left aimless?"* (Q 75:36).

The story of Moses and the righteous servant shows that God's care may operate through causes, persons, and events whose full wisdom we do not understand. Supplication does not suspend the regularities; it is itself a cause within them: it moves the heart and action, and through it God may open whatever doors he wills, in visible or hidden ways.

The place of supplication thus becomes clear: it is worship, relationship, and a search for guidance and help, not a mechanical guarantee that the form we desire will be realised. God, exalted is he, says: *"Say: My Lord would take no account of you, were it not for your supplication"* (Q 25:77).

In essence, supplication is not merely words recited by the tongue; it is the heart's turning to God in genuine need, followed by a person's use of whatever means they are able to employ. It acknowledges that God gives causes their efficacy and fulfils needs, without denying the means he has established in the world.

In this sense, supplication gives voice to the true relation between God's self-sufficiency and the human being's need: God is the source of existence and giving, while the human being subsists through him and needs him at the root of life and in every request.

In commenting on the words *"And he gave you of all you asked him"* (Q 14:34), Sayyid al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains in al-Mīzān that asking is not confined to spoken words: an existent's poverty and need constitute an existential language, and this is one aspect of ontological dependence. Supplication, however, is a conscious

act by which the human being turns to God and is not equated with that existential language of need alone. The favours that reach the human being answer many needs never expressed by the tongue.

Hence the Qur'an joins supplication to worship, sincerity, and humble submission: *"Call upon Me; I will answer you"* (Q 40:60), *"Call upon God, devoting religion sincerely to him"* (Q 40:14), and *"Call upon your Lord humbly and privately"* (Q 7:55).

The prohibition against calling upon other than God does not mean abandoning the means he has permitted. It means not ascribing independence to them and not allowing the heart to lean upon them as if they possessed benefit and harm in themselves.

The means truly operate within creation, but they remain limited and can fail, while God is the One who sustains them. The believer therefore combines treatment with supplication, planning with reliance upon God, and seeking help from people with the heart's dependence on God.

With this we understand the words of God, exalted is he: *"When My servants ask you about Me, I am near; I answer the call of anyone who calls upon Me. So let them respond to Me and believe in Me, that they may be rightly guided"* (Q 2:186).

The verse draws attention to God's non-spatial nearness and care. It does not say, "Say: I am near"; the answer comes directly from God to his servants, without an intermediary in the very phrasing. The repeated first-person pronoun reinforces the sense of care, nearness, and response.

Sincere supplication requires the heart to accord with the tongue and the request to belong to a real relationship with God rather than to a passing phrase. Yet poor concentration or distress does not place anyone outside the door of mercy: a person supplicates as they are able, and God knows the need best.

Nor does the response always consist in receiving the very thing requested, at the requested time and in the requested form. It may take the form of fulfilment, deferral, direction towards another good, the warding off of harm, or a reward God stores up.

Because the human being does not know every outcome, a person may later discover that what they pressed for did not suit them, or that one door closed while another opened. This does not prevent sorrow over what has been lost, but it broadens what it means for a prayer to be answered.

Using the available means does not corrupt supplication, nor does hoping that they will work as expected. The flaw lies in forgetting God and treating the means as a small god beyond which nothing is seen. Using means while relying upon God belongs to the completeness of servanthood.

Imam Ali, peace be upon him, counsels: "*He has placed in your hands the keys of his treasuries, in that he has permitted you to ask him... so let not the delay of his answer make you despair... and perhaps you have asked for a thing and not been given it, and been given what is better than it—immediate or deferred*" (Nahj al-Balāgha, Letter 31). This connects supplication with hope, wisdom, and refusal of despair.

Supplication as a School of Creed and Tazkiya

Whoever contemplates the supplications of the prophets in the Qur'an and those transmitted from the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, and the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, sees that supplication is not confined to presenting needs: it builds an understanding of God and the human being, trains the conscience, and turns meaning into stance and conduct.

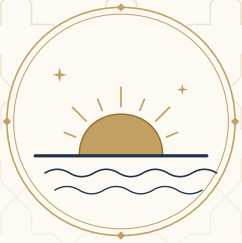
Its clearest formative effects can be organised into three domains:

First: strengthening the creed. Supplication acquaints the human being with God's names and attributes, renews reliance upon him, gratitude, and the affirmation of his oneness, and joins knowledge to presence of heart.

Second: training the conscience. Supplication opens the door to acknowledging shortfall, seeking forgiveness, and returning—without despair or self-justification—and asks God for uprightness and right guidance.

Third: refining character. Supplications teach mercy, justice, and goodness towards people and disclose what a person ought to ask for themselves and for others.

Thus the supplications of the Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them, are an intellectual and spiritual treasure that preserves the authenticity of faith and contributes to building the self and refining its direction. They do not merely tell the human being what to believe; they teach the human being how to stand before God and carry that standing into life.



PART THREE

Hope in God's Promise and the Final Outcome of Reform: The Awaited Mahdi

"We have written in the Psalms, after the Reminder: My righteous servants shall inherit the earth" (Q 21:105).

Imam al-Mahdi in the Imami Islamic Vision

Muslims believe in the glad tidings given by the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family: that at the end of time the Mahdi, from the Ahl al-Bayt, will appear to establish justice and repel injustice. In the Imami Islamic vision, he is Imam Muhammad ibn al-Hasan al-Mahdi, may God hasten his relief—the living Imam in occultation and the continuation of the line of prophethood and imamate. God has willed that his occultation last until God permits his appearance (al-Ṣadūq, Kamāl al-Dīn wa-Tamām al-Niʿma; al-Nuʿmānī, al-Ghayba).

Hadiths concerning the Mahdi are transmitted in numerous Muslim hadith sources (Sunan Abī Dāwūd, the Book of the

Mahdi; Sunan al-Tirmidhī, the chapters on tribulations; al-Kulaynī, al-Kāfī, the Book of the Proof). Detailed study of transmission chains and related questions belongs to the specialised works of creed and hadith. It is sufficient here to note that the foundation of belief in the Mahdi is present across a broad Islamic heritage, while the distinctive Imami position concerns his identity and occultation.

Faith in Imam al-Mahdi, may God hasten his relief, expresses the continuing divine promise that injustice is not the final word and that the project of guidance will reach its final outcome in the appearance of truth, the establishment of justice, and the inheritance of the earth by the righteous.

God's Promise of the Final Triumph of Justice

In the Islamic vision, history is neither closed nor purposeless, and God does not leave the human being without a horizon. From the heart of the struggle between truth and falsehood comes a divine promise: his righteous servants will inherit the earth, and reform will reach its promised fulfilment. This promise steadies the human being through prolonged injustice and sustains a hope inseparable from responsibility.

Active Awaiting

Awaiting Imam al-Mahdi, may God hasten his relief, does not mean standing outside history until relief comes or deferring reform to the future. Truly awaiting him means readiness, tazkiya, action, and steadfastness of direction when the road grows long.

A person who truly awaits him prepares for his coming: setting right what can be set right within the self, establishing justice in relationships, resisting corruption through wisdom

and legitimate means, and embodying the values of the promised project according to their position and responsibility.

The community bears responsibility for calling to goodness and reform in every age: *"Let there be from among you a community calling to goodness, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong—and those are the ones who prosper"* (Q 3:104). Awaiting thus becomes a spur to Purpose-Led Presence, not a justification for withdrawal: a person gives the present hour its due through whatever it calls for—worship, work, care, learning, rest, treatment, human connection, recreation, or lawful enjoyment—according to priority and practical scope, within servanthood and the Trust.

The Pledge during the Occultation

The believer's relationship with the Imam during the occultation is not merely a relationship to a deferred event; it is a relationship of knowledge, love, supplication, and renewal of the pledge. The believer asks God to hasten the relief and to make them among the Imam's champions, then makes the supplication truthful through justice, mercy, trustworthiness, reform, and constant readiness to champion truth.

In this way, awaiting grants a person's life a wider meaning: it becomes part of a human journey moving, by God's leave, towards the victory of truth and the final outcome of reform: *"My righteous servants shall inherit the earth"* (Q 21:105).



PART THREE

Ashura: The Immortal Human Epic

Faithfulness to the Divine Message and Reform in the Face of Injustice

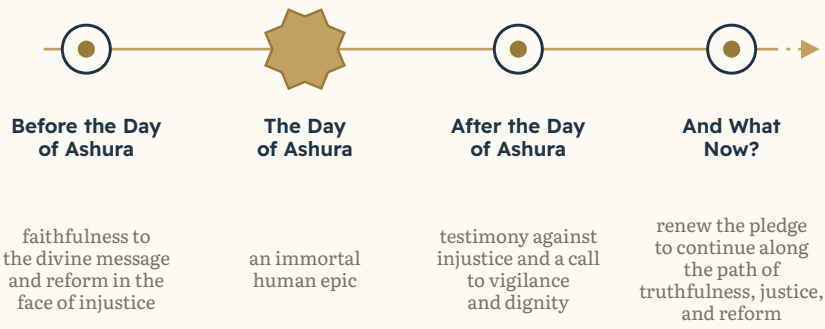
> Umm al-Fadl related: “I placed al-Husayn in the lap of the Prophet, peace be upon him and his family; then I happened to glance, and the eyes of the Messenger of God were streaming with tears. I said: O Prophet of God—may my father and mother be your ransom—what is it? He said: Gabriel came to me and told me that my community will kill this son of mine… and he brought me some of his red earth” (al-Ḥākim al-Naysābūrī, al-Mustadrak ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn, the Book of Knowledge of the Companions).

Ashura remains an immortal human epic in Islamic consciousness, not because it summons sorrow alone, but because it reveals what truthfulness with God means when reform becomes a responsibility. It brings together loving devotion, awareness, and firmness in the face of injustice. Its effect

therefore extends beyond memory to shape the human journey through life.

Before the Day of Ashura

In 61 AH (680 CE), after Yazid ibn Muʿawiya assumed rule, Imam al-Husayn ibn Ali, peace be upon him, grandson of the Messenger, peace be upon him and his family, refused to grant his rule legitimacy through an oath of allegiance, saying: "*One such as I does not give the oath of allegiance to one such as he*" (Ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf).



Ashura remains an immortal human epic in Islamic consciousness

Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, faced pressure either to give the oath of allegiance or to confront the authorities' violence. He did not make personal safety a pretext for acknowledging what he saw as a deviation from the line of the message. He held fast to dignity and moral responsibility, and his words remained a declaration that falsehood would not be granted legitimacy: "*Far from us is humiliation*" (Ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf).

Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, saw that the community's worsening condition and the absence of a voice for

reform made a clear stand incumbent upon him. He declared the purpose of his rising: *"I have gone forth only to seek reform in the community of my grandfather, the Messenger of God. I desire to enjoin what is right and to forbid what is wrong"* (al-Majlisī, Biḥār al-Anwār, vol. 44, p. 329, from his testament to Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya). Through this stand, he called for the recovery of moral freedom in the face of injustice.

Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, grasped the cost of his stance; yet he did not draw back from discharging what he saw as a moral responsibility—to preserve the meaning of the message and refuse surrender to deviation. He therefore spoke clearly to those who wished to accompany him, so that only those who had chosen the road with awareness and readiness would continue with him: *"Whoever would expend his lifeblood for us, and has made himself ready to meet God, let him depart with us"* (Ibn Ṭāwūs, al-Luhūf fī Qatlā al-Ṭufūf).

The Day of Ashura

On the tenth of Muharram in 61 AH, Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, was killed alongside a group of his family and companions after a harsh siege. The event revealed how far injustice can go when power is severed from values and truth.

Through the firmness of Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, and his faithfulness to Islam, Ashura became an immortal epic: it embodied the unity of knowledge and stance and offered the human being an exemplar of truthfulness in bearing moral responsibility when the cost rises.

After the Day of Ashura

The message of Ashura did not end with that day. Members of the Messenger's Ahl al-Bayt, peace be upon them—led by Sayyida Zaynab, peace be upon her, daughter of Imam Ali, peace be

upon him—carried the truth of what had happened from Kufa to Damascus and confronted attempts to distort the rising and conceal its purpose.

Sayyida Zaynab, peace be upon her, played a pivotal role in preserving the message. Through her stances, she embodied patience, awareness, and firmness and kept affliction tied to its purpose, lest it become sorrow isolated from reform.

Through her addresses and public stances, Sayyida Zaynab presented Ashura anew to the community's consciousness as testimony against injustice and a call to vigilance and dignity. The effect of the rising thus extended beyond the event, and its remembrance became a door to self-review and resistance to corruption through truth and justice.

And What Now?

Muslims, especially followers of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt, preserve the memory of Ashura in different forms: they keep in mind what befell Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, his family, and his companions; they weep for the violation of truth; and they renew the pledge to continue along the path of truthfulness, justice, and reform. Sorrow preserves the bond of the heart; following the example translates it into conduct.

The forms of commemorating Ashura vary—visitation, gatherings, readings from his life story and recitations of elegies, service to people, and other practices that connect memory with values. Their criterion is that they preserve human sanctity, serve the purposes of remembrance and emulation, and do not allow their outward form to overshadow their message.

In the traditions of the school of the Ahl al-Bayt, remembrance of Ashura is not confined to one season; it extends throughout the year through visiting Imam al-Husayn, peace be upon him, reading accounts of his life, and keeping his values in view on religious and social occasions.

At the visitation of al-Husayn, peace be upon him, we repeat: "*Peace be upon you, O heir of Adam, the chosen of God; peace be upon you, O heir of Noah, the prophet of God; peace be upon you, O heir of Abraham, the intimate friend of God; peace be upon you, O heir of Moses, the one to whom God spoke; peace be upon you, O heir of Jesus, the spirit of God; peace be upon you, O heir of Muhammad, the beloved of God*" (al-Ṭūsī, Miṣbāḥ al-Mutahajjid, "*The Visitation of the Heir*"). This reminds us that the divine message has one purpose throughout history: to guide the human being towards God, exalted is he.

Thus sorrow for al-Husayn, peace be upon him, joins allegiance to the line of the prophets and becomes a pledge of truthfulness, justice, and reform—a refusal to become part of injustice or a silent witness to it. Faithfulness to memory is completed when Ashura becomes a criterion for one's stance and an impetus to reform the self and society, within moral responsibility and wisdom.



REFERENCE APPARATUS

Sources and References

A Note on Documentation

References are given in the text to make sources and ideas easier to trace. The book does not undertake a detailed assessment of the narrators and transmission chains of every report; that belongs to specialised scholarship. Hadith and chapter numbers follow commonly used numbering, and page references may differ across editions.

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Where Should You Continue Reading?

The project imposes no single reading order. If you began with this book to understand the worldview foundation from which the project proceeds, turn next to Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview for the governing definitions, laws, and models. The Immortal Self expands on the human self, its becoming, and its trajectory; No Limits brings the laws into practical focus and engages with contemporary theories of human growth; Live Happily offers contemplative lived engagement; and The Journey of a Toiler gives them narrative embodiment. The Reader's Guide appears at the beginning of Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview, and its appended reference glossary helps clarify terminology and directs the reader to fuller explanations of the terms.

A QUICK MAP

1. **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the principal exposition of the cosmic vision.
2. **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text, including the Reader's Guide and reference glossary.
3. **The Immortal Self** — expands on the human self, its becoming, and its trajectory.
4. **No Limits** — brings the laws into practical focus and engages with contemporary theories of human growth.
5. **Live Happily** — the gateway to contemplation and lived engagement.
6. **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

The Reader's Guide and reference glossary are included within Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview itself.

A Message from the Author to the Reader

These books began with a question that has remained with me: How can a person understand the self, move through life, and journey towards God without becoming detached from reality, work, and responsibility? In each book I have tried to approach one aspect of that question: at times through foundational inquiry, at times through explanation, and at times through application, contemplation, or story.

I do not present these works as answers closed to further inquiry, but as a human endeavour within the Islamic worldview: one that seeks clarity and accepts review. I hope the idea remains the protagonist, the evidence its servant, and language a path by which it reaches the reader's mind, heart, and action.

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This book forms part of an intellectual project open to review and development. Material corrections and details of the latest edition or digital version are published in the Official Online Library. Documented observations may be submitted through the contact form on the site, identifying the book title, edition, page, passage, and nature of the observation. The author is grateful for scholarly and editorial comments that increase accuracy and clarity.



About the Author

ABBAS AL HUMAID

Abbas Al Humaid is an Omani writer, researcher, and strategy adviser. Questions about the human being and purpose have accompanied him since his early years: How does a human being take shape? How do knowledge, faith, and action form a conscious journey towards God? How can depth of meaning be joined to precision in action? His path through reading, writing, and professional life grew from these connected questions.

In 2023, he was honoured by the confidence of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman—may God protect and preserve him—through a Royal Decree appointing him to the State Council of the Sultanate of Oman for the 2023–2027 term. This high national responsibility marks a significant stage in his career. He contributes to the Council's work, particularly through the Economic and Financial Committee, by examining public issues and policies and offering strategic perspectives in support of national development and stronger economic and institutional performance.

He studied Islamic sciences and philosophy in traditional circles, then pursued a professional career spanning nearly three decades in accounting, audit, consulting, strategy, management, and institutional transformation. He spent more than two decades in partnership and leadership roles within international professional-services firms and led projects in strategy, transformation, restructuring, and governance in Oman and beyond.

Alongside his national role, he leads Merit Group and Merit Academy in the United Kingdom. Through these professional and educational platforms, he shares the substance of his experience with leaders, individuals, and institutions and contributes to the development of strategic, managerial, and professional capacities. His international professional credentials in accounting, consulting, and management include CPA, CFE, CMC, and CMgr.

This professional experience has never been separate from his intellectual concerns. He came to see that spirit and strategy, despite their apparent distance, meet in one question: How does purpose become a path, vision become action, and a person move from one state to another? His writing therefore seeks to connect contemplation with work, ideas with their effects, and worldview with the human journey through life.

He founded the Islamic Theory of Origination Project as an interpretive intellectual project situated within the Islamic worldview. The project studies human becoming, existential movement, growth, conduct, and the human being's moral and spiritual vocation. It connects intellectual foundations with human experience and practical application. His writings range across the Islamic worldview, human growth, Qur'anic contemplation, literary narrative, management, and strategy.

Abbas Al Humaid writes as a researcher engaged in interpretive reasoning, distinguishing sacred text from human understanding and religious foundations from interpretive constructions open to examination and review. His writing is grounded in clarity of thought, accurate attribution, respect for the reader's intellect, and openness to criticism and correction.

He makes the digital editions displayed in his online library freely available in the hope that knowledge will travel further and dialogue around it will widen. What he asks of the reader is not quick agreement, but an honest reading, an examination of ideas, and the submission of corrections wherever the reader sees a need: the idea is the protagonist, evidence serves it, and language is the path.

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Books in the Islamic Theory of Origination Project

THE SIX BOOKS

1. **The Islamic Intellectual Framework** — the worldview foundation and the principal exposition of the cosmic vision.
2. **Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview** — the governing reference text.
3. **The Immortal Self** — expands on the human self, its becoming, and its trajectory.
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6. **The Journey of a Toiler** — the gateway to narrative embodiment.

READER'S GUIDE AND REFERENCE GLOSSARY

Human Becoming in the Islamic Worldview includes the Reader's Guide to the project and its reference glossary. The former presents the map and reading paths; the latter defines the terms and clarifies cross-references. Both are parts of the governing reference book itself, not a separate volume or a seventh book.

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THE ISLAMIC THEORY OF ORIGINATION PROJECT

This book presents the Islamic worldview from which the Islamic Theory of Origination proceeds, explaining the reality of existence, the human being's relation to the Lord, the purpose of life, and life's major governing regularities. It is the book that explains the project's worldview foundation and provides the other books with their cosmic and creedal ground, without replacing the governing reference text.

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