*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 13*

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 13 of the Revelation (1 BH/621-622 CE)

Revised Edition

Introduction by
Mohammad Hashim Kamali

Library of Islam

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# Year 13 of the Revelation
## Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 1 BH
## ca. July 27, 621-July 15, 622 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 13*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 1 BH/ca. July 27, 621 CE-July 15, 622 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

**SOURCES**

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

**TERMINOLOGY**

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

## THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

**THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS**

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

*****

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# INTRODUCTION

## READING THE SIGNS: A QURANIC PERSPECTIVE ON THINKING

### BY MOHAMMAD HASHIM KAMALI

The Islamic notion of *aql* (intellect) embraces the faith dimension of knowledge that is also informed by ethical values. The prevailing reading of the Quran on rationality consists of a coalition of faith and reason which is also cognizant of the metaphysical aspect of reality and the limits, therefore, of human reason. This may be said to be a dividing line between the Islamic and Western conceptions of rationality, especially in its post-Enlightenment context.

Thus, it is not accurate to draw a direct parallel between them, as was the case in the Islamic discourse of the colonial period wherein many Muslim writers greatly admired the Western conception of rationality. The twentieth century Islamic discourse has shown awareness of that difference as it began to comprehend the subtleties inherent in the Western lexicon on rationality and its cultural overtones.[1]

### THE DIVINE SIGNS (*AYAT*)

The Quran teaches an essential doctrine of the *ayat* (God's signs in the universe) functioning as pointers to the providential purpose at all levels of creation. Thus the Quran makes frequent references such as 'signs for a people who understand—exercise their intellect'. This evidential role of the divine signs entails an accompanying demand placed upon humans to engage in a rational understanding of the signs and draw conclusions on the discovery of truth and correct guidance.

The human reception of the signs, thus, depends ultimately upon the integrity of reason, without which humans would be incapable neither of comprehending the signs nor of responding to their message. The more abundant is an individual's native endowment of reason, the greater is the possibility for him or her to attain a larger magnitude of understanding and a higher level of response.

The nexus between faith and reason thus constitutes the hallmark of intelligent Islamic spirituality, wherein human intellect and emotions are guided toward harmony with one another. The Quran repeatedly provokes its reciters to think about the signs of God in the universe and within themselves, to understand God's illustrious presence in them, and ultimately to vindicate the truth. The word *ayah* and its plural *ayat* occur in the Quran over 400 times, although the whole of the Quran introduces itself as a collection of *ayat*. To quote the Quran: *We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53) And, *On the earth are signs, for the ones that are certain and in yourselves.*

*Will you not, then, perceive?* (51:20-51:21)

God reveals the truth in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be readjust off the face of the signs but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We will cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

Approximately 750 verses, or nearly one-eighth of the Quran, exhort the readers to study nature, history, the Quran itself, and humanity at large. The text of the Quran employs a range of expressions in its appeal to those who listen (*yasma'un*), those who think (*yatafakkarun*), those who reflect (*yatadabbarun*), those who observe (*yanzurun*), those who exercise their intellect (*ya'qilun*), those who take heed and remember (*yatadhakkarun*), those who ask questions (*yas'alun*), those who develop an insight (*yatafaqqahun*), and those who know (*ya'lamun*).[2]

These and their derivatives (mostly occurring in the active verbal form) consist essentially of open invocations and encouragement to thinking that is not limited by a methodology or framework. *Meditate they not, then, on the Quran* (*afala yatadabbarun al-Qur'an*) (47:24) *Tadabbur* means concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem.

Quranic references to thinking and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes: Belief in the Oneness and generosity of God (*tawhid*); reflection on the Quran; the human being and the universe; historical precedent; and thinking itself.

References to *aql* (intellect) and its derivatives occur on 49 occasions in the text. The typical Quranic expression, *ulu'l-albab* (those who possess vision and understanding), and its synonym, *ulu'l-nuha* (people endowed with intellectual abilities) occur 33 times in the text. Such expressions are frequently juxtaposed with the exposition of signs, such as in the sign: *Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242) or in the sign: *Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (57:17). Repeated references to pondering over the signs are variously nuanced such that they embrace within their fold the widest spectrum of people who may be endowed with different intellectual abilities and endowments.[3]

Al-Isfahani defines thought (*al-fikr*) as the power of the mind that facilitates access to knowledge (*'ilm*). Thinking (*al-tafakkur*) is the movement of

that power which is driven by the intellect (*al-'aql*), and this can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker. Thinking cannot, therefore, proceed over something of which no image exists in the mind. This can be said of the self of God, for example, as we have no image on which to focus our thought.[4]

The human being can only think over the attributes of God through the observation of His signs. Broadly speaking, thinking proceeds over the whole of the created universe without any exception; indeed, the Quran repeatedly invites such in respect to both the physical and abstract aspects of reality, both in the present and in regards to bygone history that is only perceived by the intellect rather than sense perception. Often the Quran gives examples, parables, and narratives of other nations, and then follows them with the reminder, usually addressed to the Prophet, to recount the narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them:

*And recount to them the tiding of him to whom We gave Our signs.* (7:175)

*And there are the parables that We propound for humanity so that perhaps they will reflect.* (59:21)

*Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

A hierarchy of five perceptive-cognitive functions is also suggested, including and extending through hearing, sight, thinking, dhikr remembrance, and certainty.[5]

Given such a scale of intensified perceptive understanding, the Quran propounds the notion of *ulul'l-albab*, the thoughtful individuals who are possessed of proper understanding and response. *'Aql* is thus tied to the cognitive dimension of faith.

Significantly, the very term for reason and intelligence in Arabic, *al-'aql*, has at the core of its basic meaning the practical idea of "restraining" and "binding," that is, of holding one's self back from blameworthy conduct—being an interior self-imposed limit. Quranic commentators understand thinking (*tafakkur, tafkir*) as pondering and reflection, which is a mental activity and process, not an outcome.

Thinking (*tafakkur*) is considered as a form of worship of God if it is done with sincerity and good purpose. *'Aql* in its Quranic conception is also one that conceives the truth, and it is always in search of it. This conception of *'aql* precludes one that is rigid, arrogant, and misleading. Some have also drawn the conclusion from the ubiquitous Quranic emphasis on thinking that all Muslims must strive to be thinking individuals.[6]

Al-Qaradawi has quoted Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's (d. 751/1350) own observation as well as some epithetic statements, the latter narrated from other leading figures to the effect that "thinking for an hour is better than worship of many years," and another statement that "thinking for an hour is superior to a whole night of prayer." To this Ibn Qayyim added that "thinking is the act of the heart whereas worship is the act of one's limbs, and the former is

superior to the latter."

The pious caliph Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz (d. 101/718) is similarly quoted: Thinking over the bounties of God is the best form of worship. Abbas Mahmud al-Agqad went so far as to say that: Thinking—*al-tafkir*—is an Islamic obligation. Just as God Most High ordered us to worship Him by performing prayer and fasting, He also ordered us to think in numerous verses and in so many different ways, all of which vindicate thinking as one of the cardinal messages of the Quran.[7]

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression *al-tafaqquh fi'l-din*, that is, understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a Quranic worldview.

Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsili*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the religious scholars of all the leading schools of thought. Thus it is declared in a sign: *But a section of people only that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk.* (9:122).

We also note the distinction between thought-based knowledge and transmitted or received knowledge reflected in the twin juristic and hadith-related expressions of knowledge based on understanding (*'ilm al-diraya*), and report-based and transmitted knowledge (*'ilm al-riwaya*). The former is based on understanding and insight (*diraya wa tafaqquh*) and takes priority over the latter. Whereas *'ilm al-riwaya* relies mainly on memory and retention, *'ilm al-diraya* is based on cognition, understanding, and analysis.

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*'ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis.

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word Book or *kitab*, which is a reference to di-

vine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text, thus, says with reference to Jesus: *And He teaches him the Book and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel.* (3:48) The juxtaposition of *kitab* and *hikmah* is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom (e.g., *wa yu'allimuhum al-kitaba wa'l-hikmata*) as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad: *And teaches you the Book and wisdom* (2:159) and: *Teaches them the Book and wisdom* (62:2 ff); the descendants of Prophet Abraham: *We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom* (4:54); and of Luqman: *We gave Luqman wisdom* (31:12). The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness: *And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269).

To mention *hikmah* together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of *hikmah* thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[8]

The repeated juxtaposition of the "Book and *Hikmah*" in the Quran led some commentators, such as the Successor, Qatadah ibn Diama al-Sadusi (d.118 H), Ibn Wahhab, the disciple of Imam Malik (d. 179/795), and the Imam al-Shafii (d. 205/820) himself to the somewhat unusual observation that "*hikmah*" is a reference to the Sunna of the Prophet. Many have taken and followed this view; but since the text does not specify such a meaning for *hikmah*, the word should convey its natural and unqualified meaning as I have depicted in this presentation.

Good judgment, insight, balance and avoidance of extremes, the ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, and procedural accuracy are commonly associated with *hikmah* and *hikmah* as such becomes a dimension of evaluative thinking in. its Quranic idiom. Besides, when the Quran declares that God Most High endowed the Prophets David and Solomon and also the renowned sage Luqman with *hikmah*, it could not have referred to the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad, as Sunna as such did not exist in those times.

The Quranic usage of *hikmah* reinforces the holistic quality of thinking. *Hikmah* also seeks to forge a close tie between reason and emotion (*'aql wa qalb*) thereby encouraging what is now known as emotional intelligence. This is how the Quran and also the Sunna often deliver their messages, for, unlike the modern statutory laws and texts, the Quranic guidance, commands, and

prohibitions are often espoused with appeals to the heart and mind of their readers.[9]

Al-Isfahani defined *hikmah* as the realization of the truth through knowledge and intellect and it is manifested in the performance of benevolent deeds.[10] According to another definition: Wisdom signifies comprehension of the truth and reality and the ability to avoid corruption in one's quest to attain perfection."[11]

*Random House Dictionary of the English Language* similarly defines wisdom as: Knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgment as to action. Wisdom is thinking informed by the light of the heart that often leads to action and contemplates its consequences in relationship with other relevant factors. This may strike a note with the renowned hadith in which it is declared that: Fearing God is the pinnacle of wisdom (*ra's al-hikmati makhafat Allah*)."[12]

It is presumably for this reason that the great religions of the world have urged the seekers of knowledge to combine it with wisdom. It is wisdom that confers a higher quality on thinking and helps knowledge to be used for the promotion of good giving it meaning and direction.

In an effort to train the individual to enhance his or her quality of thinking, al-Ghazali (d. 505/1111) discusses the two sources of knowledge that Muslim tradition has recognized. One of these is through human teaching and learning (*al-ta'allum al-insani*) and the other through divine teaching (*al-ta'lim al-rabbani*).

The former is externally transmitted from teacher to student, whereas the latter is conveyed by the Universal Intellect which is superior, more intense, and more effective than human teaching. This knowledge is internally acquired either through revelation (*wahy*), which is a prerogative of the Prophets, or it is acquired through meditation, thinking, and reflection.

Al-Ghazali subscribes to the view that the essence of all knowledge is centered in the inner self of the human person in much the same way as growth potential that is vested in the soil and seed, and it is through teaching that the individual's potential is developed.[13] These two aspects of knowledge, that is, the external and the internal, are complementary to one another. This is because no one can possibly teach or learn from any teacher all the sciences, some of which are learned through teaching but the rest inferred by the reflective thought of the individual. It is therefore important that the avenues of learning remain open both through teaching and through inner reflection, thinking, and illumination. This is another way of saying that all knowledge is acquired and developed through the senses, inner reflection and thinking, both of which partake in natural endowment and development through external transmission and teaching.

Al-Ghazali's views on the internal and external sources of knowledge tended to correspond with those of Ibn Sina (d. 428/1037), but which differed,

at least partially, from those of the second/ninth century Ikhwan al-Safa (c. 373/983). All knowledge, according to the latter, is acquired through the senses and none inheres in human nature. Knowledge that is developed through thought and reflection also originate in the senses. The same analysis is extended to the axiomatic knowledge of postulates that are derived and confirmed through the senses. In support of this theory Ikhwan al-Safa have cited the Quranic verse: *And God brought you out from the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing.* (16:78). All knowledge is therefore acquired knowledge, a view which may strike a closer note with some of the modern theories on the subject.[14]

Muslim thought in the middle ages did not admit the ontological distinction between tangible entities that could be sensuously apprehended and entities of a spiritual or subliminal nature. This may be said to be a more sound and realistic view of reality than is allowed for by the modern positivist doctrines of science. Being is manifested at various levels and in several forms, none of which is less real than the other. Arabic thought employed the notions systematized in Stoic theory that divide being into three locations: Verbal utterance, psychic representation, and reality—without this last in any sense having exclusive title to Being.

Al-Farabi (d. 950 CE) took up this view and assimilated psychic representation to the entities of reason. Others rehearsed this division with the addition of a fourth location, that of Scripture. Reality thus had a four-fold manifestation, depending on whether the subject existed immediately in itself or whether its like was graven in the mind (*dhihn*, psyche) composed of sounds, which together indicates the psychic representation, or was manifested in characters standing for sound and speech. All four have a basic characteristic in common which is existence (*wujud, haqiqah*).[15]

The Islamic and Western perceptions of creative and evaluative thinking both recognize this to be a skill that is developed through training and controlled exercise. It is through training and thinking that we adopt new patterns of perceiving reality that we are able to see differently and creatively. It is generally acceded that creative thinking and critical thinking go hand-in-hand and complement one another. Critical thinking means "involving or exercising skilled judgment or observation." Thinking is critical when it evaluates the reasoning behind a decision. Such evaluation must, however, be carried forth in a constructive manner.[16]

The purpose of critical thinking is to achieve understanding, evaluate viewpoints, and solve problems. In general, one's thinking is likely to become critical when concrete learning experiences precede abstract thought.[17] This strikes a parallel note, in its Islamic idiom, with thinking that is espoused with *hikmah*.

The famous yet controverted hadith: The first (being) God created is the intelligence (*awwalu ma khalaqa Allahu al-'aqla*), sparked prolonged discus-

sions among Muslim thinkers over many centuries over the implications of this statement. Among the issues debated was the priority of reason over revelation and the respective role of each in their mutual inter-dependence.

Another issue was whether the disparity among humans in respect of reason also affected the modalities of moral obligation. Some prominent thinkers including Abu Bakr al-Razi (d. 313/925) apparently advocated the primacy of reason over the revelation. This would be properly known as "rationalism," which deems the primacy of reason over revelation. This is different from "rationality" which means treating any issue by using reason without giving reason priority.

## SOURCES AND INSTRUMENTS OF KNOWLEDGE

Commenting on the Quranic passage quoted earlier, Muhammad Iqbal observed that the Quran regards both self (*anfus*) and world (*afaq*) as sources of knowledge. God reveals His signs in inner as well as outer experience. The Quran thus opens fresh vistas of knowledge in the domain of our inner experience. Mystic experience and intuition, then, however unusual and abnormal, must now be regarded as perfectly natural and open to scrutiny like other aspects of human experience." But inner experience is only one source of human knowledge. The outer experience in the Quran, Iqbal continues on the same page, unfolds two other sources of knowledge—nature and history, and it is in tapping these sources of knowledge that "the spirit of Islam is seen at its best".

The Quran sees the signs of reality in the sun, the moon, the alternation of day and night, the perpetual changes of the winds, the variety of human colors and tongues, and in fact in the whole of nature as revealed to the sense-perception of man. The Muslim's duty is to reflect on these signs and not to pass by them as if he is deaf and blind *They have hearts with which they understand not. And they have eyes with which they perceive not. And they have ears with which they hear not. Those are like flocks. Nay! They are ones who go astray. Those, they are the ones who are heedless* (7:179), for he who does not see these signs in this life will remain blind to the realities of the life to come. The divine signs are observed through sense-perception using mainly the faculties of hearing, sight, and intellect: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear?* (22:46) The emphasis in this sign is on the faculty of reason and understanding, suggesting that not all of our information about nature comes directly from sensation, for if that were the case we would be no different from animals.

Frequent references to sense-perception as the principal mode of receiving the signs show the scientific/experimental import of the Quran. The Quran goes even further to suggest sense perception as the only avenue of knowledge, as the text already reviewed provides: *And God brought you out from*

*the wombs of your mothers and you know nothing. And He assigned to you the ability to hear and sight and mind so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (16:78) Knowledge of the signs is therefore acquired through the use of these faculties. In another sign, the Quran praises those who listen to the word and follow the best of it: *Those who listen to the saying of the Quran and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. And those, they are imbued with intuition.* (or make the best possible interpretation thereof) (39:18). This sign apparently subjects the data of sense-perception to the exercise of intellectual selection. The text also teaches that sense-perception does not perceive all reality: *So I swear an oath by what you perceive and what you perceive not.* (69:37-69:38). Certainty (*yaqin*) may also be beyond the reach of human intellect, as the human mind may be blurred by the variables of time and space. What is deemed certain today may be uncertain tomorrow.

We also note that according to the teachings of the Quran, the universe is dynamic in its origin, finite, and capable of increase. Early Muslim thinkers do not seem to have grasped the Quranic emphasis on inductive reasoning and experimentation. It was indeed a slow realization for Muslim thinkers to note "that the spirit of the Quran was essentially anti-classical". Putting full confidence in Greek reasoning, Muslim thinkers tried to understand the Quran in the light of Greek philosophy, which in the beginning of their careers they had studied with so much enthusiasm.

The substance of Iqbal's analysis on this subject is also upheld by Malik bin Nabi (1905-1973), who understands the creative impulse of the Quran as the motivating force behind the efflorescence of science at a time when Muslim thinkers began to grasp the full impact of the Quran on experimentation and inductive reasoning.[18]

The dynamic conception of the universe in the Quran is also seen by its conception of life as an evolutionary movement in time. History thus constitutes the third source of knowledge in the Quran. It is one of the most essential teachings of the Quran, as Iqbal has further observed, that nations are collectively judged, and suffer for their misdeeds here and now. The Quran thus constantly cites historical instances, and urges upon the reader to reflect on the past and present experiences of humanity: *Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

*If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses to Himself from among you.* (3:140)

And: *And of whom We created there is a community that guides with The Truth, and with it, it is just. And those who denied Our signs, We will draw them on gradually from where they will not know.* (7:181-183)

The Quran's interest in history as a source of human knowledge extends farther than mere indication of historical generalizations. "It has given us one

of the most fundamental principles of historical criticism."[19] Since accuracy in recording facts is an indispensable condition of history as a science, accuracy depends ultimately on those who report them. The reporter's personal character is thus an important factor in judging his testimony. The Quran says *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.* (49:6). It is the application of the principle embodied in this sign to the reporters of the Prophet's traditions out of which were gradually evolved the canons of historical criticism.

A scientific treatment of history, however, requires a wider experience, a greater maturity of practical reason, and a fuller realization of certain basic ideas regarding the nature of life and time. These are in the main three, and taken together they constitute the foundation of Quranic teaching.

**(1) The unity of human origin:** The Quran states: *He creates you from one soul.* (39:6) And: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord Who created you from a single soul.* (4:1). But the perception of life as an organic unity is a slow achievement. Islam sowed the germ of this aspiration and it became a Quranic assignment of us to work towards its realization. Notwithstanding the fact that Christianity, long before Islam, brought the message of equality to humanity, the Roman Empire had no more than a general and abstract conception of human unity.

On the other hand, the growth of territorial nationalism in Europe has tended to stifle the broad human element in the art and literature of Europe. European colonialism was also inspired by a self-image of superiority. Europe assumed a superior image that non-European peoples could be freely dominated, exploited, and subjugated.[20] It was quite otherwise with Islam. The impulse of Islam was from the outset to make the idea of human unity a living factor in the Muslim experience that was to be taken towards fuller fruition.

**(2) A keen sense of the reality of time, and the concept of life as a continuous movement in time**: The Quranic view of the alternation of day and night as a sign of the ultimate Reality which appears in a fresh glory every moment and the tendency in Muslim metaphysics to regard time as objective—all this constituted the intellectual heritage and ideals of Islam.

**(3) The merger between religious and secular values:** This is a unique feature of Islamic thought which is distinguished by its attempt to bring harmony between them, probably for the first time in history. It was in the state of Madinah that we encounter a clear example where universally proclaimed moral values formed the criteria of political judgment. Political leaders and statesmen were expected to recognize not only the value of efficiency, but also of justice, human dignity, equality, and freedom. In his renowned *Philosophy of History*, Hegel (1770-1831) recognized that the unity between the secular and the spiritual took place in Islamic society and civilization long before it made any impact in the modern West: We must therefore regard (the

reconciliation between the secular and spiritual) as commencing rather in the enormous contrast between the spiritual religious principles, and the barbarian Real World. For spirit as the consciousness of an inner world is, at the commencement, itself still in the abstract form. All that is secular is consequently given over to rudeness and capricious violence. The (Muslim) principle, the enlightenment of the oriental world, is the first to contravene this barbarism and caprice. We find it developing itself later and more rapidly than Christianity; for the latter needed eight centuries to grow into a political form.[21]

The modern West followed the example of the historical Islamic world in demanding that holders of political power operate under a set of moral rules. But as the modern West harmonized the secular and religious only nationally, the international realm was free to operate under the dynamics of power politics and secular rudeness. This failure was a cause of the senseless violence that claimed over 100 million war victims in the twentieth century. Recognition of the danger of the purely secular politics led to the creation of the United Nations, yet even this effort was undermined by political realists who enjoyed a disproportionate sway among the political pundits of Europe and America.

Safi has rightly noted the irony that contemporary Muslim societies have unfortunately followed a similar course in decoupling the secular and the religious and now find themselves entangled in a crisis of legitimacy. Many Muslim regimes are driven by the logic of power and operate outside the realm of moral correctness. It is alarming to see that this decoupling has impacted the religiously inspired movements, which seem to succumb to the logic of power in their readiness to employ amoral--even immoral--strategies in their fight against political corruption and oppression.[22]

## Obstacles to Correct Reasoning

The Quranic emphasis on pondering over the signs is also underscored by a set of guidelines to ensure a correct outcome of reflection and thinking over them. The text thus draws attention to a series of exclusions and factors that stand in the way of the proper functioning of intellect:

**(1) Pursuit of caprice** (*hawa*) which may consist of love, hatred, pomposity and prejudice that confound impartiality and sound judgment: *Had you considered he who took to himself his own desire as his god and whom God caused to go astray out of a knowledge, sealed over his having the ability to hear and his heart and laid a blindfold on his sight? Who, then, will guide him after God? Will you not, then, recollect?* (45:23)

*And if you had followed their desires after what drew near you of the knowledge, there is not for you from God either a protector or a helper.* (2:120)

*But if they respond not to you, then, know that they only follow their own desires.* (28:50)

And: *And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.*

(18:28)

The choice is between two alternatives: caprice (*hawa*) and guidance (*huda*); the former evidently renders obscure one's attempt to attain the latter.

**(2) Pursuit of conjecture in the face of certitude**: And surely conjecture (*al-zann*) avails nothing against the truth (*al-Haqq*). *And most of them follow nothing but opinion. Truly, opinion avails them not against The Truth at all.* (10:36)

*And follow up not of what there is not for you knowledge of it. Truly, having the ability to hear and sight and mind, each of those will have been that which is asked.* (17:36) Knowledge and truth stand in contradistinction with the pursuit of conjecture. Note that the text says one should not follow conjecture until it is established and elevated to the rank of knowledge. It does not say that one should avoid conjecture altogether. In another place, conjecture occurs side by side with *hawa* or that which they themselves desire: *They follow nothing but opinion and that for which their souls yearn.* (53:23) This is the kind of conjecture or opinion that is meant.

Knowledge is established by sense-perception that often begins with a measure of speculation and doubt but which is affirmed by the light of reason and conviction. Some commentators maintain that the main context for this guideline is religion: Thus it is said that one should not take speculative positions in matters of belief. As for scientific enquiry and pursuit of knowledge, conjecture is neither discouraged nor avoidable.[23]

The ultimate purpose of this engagement is to attain the truth. Once the truth is attained, one should then commit oneself to it and observe it: *And what else is there after The Truth but wandering astray. Where, then, turn you away?* (10:32)

*Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice. There is no one who changes His Words.* (54) (6:115).

**(3) Blind imitation of others**: The correct exercise of reason in Islam is tied to personal conviction as opposed to indiscriminate following of others, hallowed custom, and precedent. These must be judged in the light of reason and abandoned if found deviant and misleading: The misguided will say, as the Quran provides: *Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it —even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

And: *Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)

This was the response that Prophet Abraham and other great prophets received from their detractors, but the text address them again and again that both you and your ancestors were clearly misguided. *Certainly, We gave Abraham his right judgment before. And We had been ones who know of him when he said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to? They said: We found our fathers as ones who are*

*worshippers of them. He said: Certainly, you and your fathers had been in a clear wandering astray.*(21:51-21:54)

*Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded.* (6:70)

*Is it that **your** formal prayer commands **you** that we leave what our fathers worship?* (11:87)

As we shall presently elaborate, indiscriminate imitation of others is widely held to be the single most damaging cause of the decline of creative thinking among Muslims.

**(4) Oppressive Dictatorship**: The Quran takes to task arrogant dictators and those who support them and follow them. Hence the plea of those who say: *Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way* (33:66) should be of no merit. In a number of other places the text denounces the Pharaoh and Karun for their oppressive ways who misled their people in rejecting the guidance that was conveyed to them. *Pharaoh and his Council but they followed the command of Pharaoh. And the command of Pharaoh was not well-intended.* (11:96)

## DECLINE OF CRITICAL THINKING

I shall not retrace well-documented history that Muslim thinkers were pioneers in the creation of new knowledge. It was due to the impact of the Quran that, in contrast to the Greeks who excelled in deductive method of reasoning and logic, Muslim scientists distinguished themselves in inductive and experimental approaches to scientific enquiry. The golden period of Muslim science started around 700 AD and lasted until about 1350 AD. Great thinkers such as Ibn Sina, Jabir ibn Hayyan, Abu Bakr Zakarriya al-Razi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Ibn al-Nafis al-Dimashgi, al-Khawarizmi, and many others have left a rich legacy of contributions to the advancement of sciences in anatomy, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, optics, etc.[24]

After the fourteenth century creative thinking began to decline in the Islamic world due to a variety of factors, including the Mongol invasion and burning of Baghdad, the defeat of the Muslim Arabs in Spain and the continuing crusades, the collapse of the Ottoman caliphate, and the ensuing onslaught of European colonialism. The creative impulse of Islamic thought suffered setbacks as a result. Muslims were also beset with many internal problems including the alienation of philosophers, scientists, and thinkers from the theologians, sectarian controversies, and the prevalence of intellectual conservatism and imitation of past authority (*taqlid*)).

Philosophy and the sciences fell into a rapid decline while more rigid forms of instruction and narrower curricula prevailed. It was argued that orthodoxy was being threatened and that there was a need to restrain thinkers in order to defend religion. The latitude and diversity of discourse that expanded the scope of religious sciences, theology (*kalam*), commentary (*tafsir*), hadith,

and jurisprudence (*fiqh*) gave way to narrower criteria of *kufr*, *bidah*, and *taqlid* and the so-called closing of the door of *ijtihad* (*sadd bab al-ijtihad*).[25]

More recently, a certain abuse of Islamic authority operated by a dogmatic radicalism has exacerbated the decline of creative thought among Muslims. The situation is not helped by the prevalence of passivity in popular culture concerning the dogmatic excesses of these ardent proponents of imitation of past authority (*taqlid*). One of the salient features of this mindset is a certain ignorance of the essential impulse of the Quran on creative thought. Malik bin Nabi put it succinctly that the crisis of a civilization and a society at a critical point of its history "is not the paucity of its material objects but the poverty of its ideas."[26]

## WHAT IS *IJTIHAD*?

The Quranic appeal to rational thinking and enquiry is not restrained by the methodology of *ijtihad*. There is, in fact, no clear text on *ijtihad*[27] in the Quran. *Ijtihad* as a concept originates in the hadith of the Prophet and the practice and precedent of companions. The methodology of *ijtihad* which is the basic theme of the science of the sources of law (i.e. *usul al-fiqh*) is itself a product of *ijtihad*. It seems that the Prophet also saw *ijtihad* as a creative impulse rather than engaging in the technicalities of legal reasoning—as the *usul al-fiqh* later developed in abundance. When the Prophet spoke of *ijtihad* or when he approved of its application, he seems to have done so in terms of *ijtihad* qua creative thinking.

One would readily admit that imposing restrictions on thinking, even if it were possible, by cultures and legal traditions could be exaggerated, in which case it would be prone to acquiring negative dimensions. One would not, on the other hand, advocate free thinking that is not limited by some kind of goal-orientation and values. Even the actual process of creative thinking, as earlier noted, is a skill that could be learned and refined by stages to direct it into productive avenues. The liberal tradition of the West tends to impose minimal restrictions on thinking whereas Islam tends to take a more guided approach to creative reasoning. Whereas both the Islamic and Western traditions recognize the authority of reason as a criterion of judgment, the liberal tradition has, unlike Islam, isolated spirituality and faith from the ambit of scientific rationality.

However, the methodology of *ijtihad* was also influenced in the course of time by a variety of factors, including the political climate, the change of caliphate (*khilafah*) to monarchy (*mulk*), Hellenistic thought in relationship to analogy (*qiyas*) and its syllogistic components, and the rift between the religious scholars and ruling authorities.[28]

*Usul al-fiqh* and its proposed methodology followed a difficult course and became embroiled in technicality that had adverse consequences for *ijtihad*. What is needed now is to recapture the purity of this vital concept, to

make *ijtihad* as our principal instrument for originality and healthy adjustment, but also to revise and reform some aspects of the theory of *ijtihad* itself that are no longer responsive to the prevailing conditions and challenges of our time.

I have elsewhere discussed the theory of *ijtihad* and its related issues and space here does not permit engagement in detail.[29] Yet I conclude this section by suggesting, however briefly, that the conventional theory of *ijtihad* needs to be revised and reformed in respect of the need:

1) to recognize the validity of collective and consultative *ijtihad* (*ijtihad jama'i*) side by side with that of *ijtihad* by individual scholars;

2) to allow experts in other fields such as science, economics, and medicine to carry out *ijtihad* in their respective fields if they are equipped with adequate knowledge of the source evidence of Islam. They may alternatively sit together with, or seek advice from, those learned in *Shariah*.

*Ijtihad* has in the past been often used as an instrument of diversity and disagreement rather than of unity and consensus. Although disagreement must admittedly be allowed in principle, yet there is a greater need today for unity and consensus. Scholars and learned bodies should not perhaps encourage excessive engagement in diversity of schools and sects but try to find ways that would help to close the gap between them and encourage unity on principles. This may require policy guidelines for different settings and countries, and, if so, that should be reflected in our approaches to *ijtihad*. Certain guidelines may also be provided by thinkers and leaders to stimulate consensus-oriented *ijtihad* within the ranks of the judiciary and legislative assemblies.

*Ijtihad* has in the past been conceived basically as a legal concept and methodology. Our understanding of the source evidence on *ijtihad* does not specify such a framework for *ijtihad*. Rather, we think of the original conception of *ijtihad* as a problem-solving formula for the problems encountered by individual Muslims and the Muslim community. This would confirm our view of the need to broaden the scope of *ijtihad* to other disciplines beyond the framework of *fiqh* and *usul al-fiqh*.

According to a legal maxim of Islamic jurisprudence, there should be no *ijtihad* in the presence of a clear text of the Quran and Hadith (*la ijtihad ma'al-nass*). This maxim should also be revised. This is because of the possibility that the text in question could now be seen in a different light and given a fresh interpretation in a different context. What we are saying is that the legal text may need to be understood first and that by itself may involve *ijtihad*. Hence *ijtihad* may not be precluded if it could advance a fresh understanding of the text in the first place.

The persistent decline of critical reason among Muslims is due partly to the notion that the exercise of personal judgment and *ijtihad* ceased with the epoch-making works of the legists and imams of the past. Added to this is the prevailing mindset that a Muslim should follow one or the other of the estab-

lished schools of thought and abandon his judgment in favor of interpretations of the earlier centuries whose originators could have no conception of the necessities of the twenty-first century Muslims. Until about 1500 CE, independent *ijtihad* allowed Muslims and Muslim societies to continually adapt in the face of changing societal conditions and new advances in knowledge.

Unfortunately, as Muslim civilization began to weaken about four centuries ago in the face of Western advances, Muslims began to adopt a more conservative stance in an attempt to preserve traditional values and institutions. As a result Muslim thinkers became inclined to view innovation and adaptation negatively. For all the rhetoric and symbolic form of the neo-radicals that tend to dominate the audience of Muslims, the spirit of Islam is often palpably missing from their endeavors, while more than ever *ijtihad* is needed where women, education, and politics are concerned.

## ISLAM AND THE WEST

Scientific rationality essentially reduces intelligence to the level of neural chemistry where mental and behavioral phenomena are understood merely as manifestations of physical processes. It tends to deprive us of our noblest dimensions (faith, love, beauty), separates the soul from the body, and the sensory from the intelligible. In the realm of economics, we are merely a producer and consumer of goods and is moved solely by our individual self-interest. This too is opposed to the Islamic viewpoint which also sees in us morality and transcendent faith.

This physicalist analysis of intelligence is now increasingly being seen as conceptually inadequate. The real question is whether one may admit a human dimension which is autonomous and irreducible to a physical mass. In Moravia's phrase "can one posit something which exists and yet at the same time is non physical? Do the rejection of the soul and the achievements attained by bio and neurosciences oblige us to hold that man is nothing but body?"[30] Recently these have been attempted by some creative thinkers to reconceptualize intentions of 'reason' and 'intelligence' along anti-materialistic lines drawing on the experience of older non-Western traditions, or even popular folk conceptions.[31]

Islamic philosophy—which mainly studies purposes, as against science which mainly studies causes—sees, in line with the Quranic teaching, the role of objects and events as signs of divine presence and action. Faith is understood by Muslims not as a limitation on science but as its vista for enrichment and perfection.[32]

The variant perspectives of Western philosophy and science are also behind the Western puzzlement why Muslims have not become more secularized. This unwarranted assumption has in the past led to mistaken assessments of Islam and continues to foster genuine misunderstanding concerning the real nature of Islamic religion and intellectual traditions. The misunderstanding is

unfortunately not unique to Westerners. For the majority of Muslims today are also woefully uninformed of the depth and scope of their rich heritage on the authoritative validity of reason. Thinking Muslims should work to vindicate the symbiotic relation of faith and reason in their religion and see it as a source of enrichment and contribution of Islam to human understanding and civilization.

## CONCLUSION

This essay advanced a Quranic perspective on thinking, which is affirmative in critical and goal-oriented thinking and also provides a set of guidelines that ensures its purity and purpose from negative reductionist influences. The guidelines so provided are also rich in advancing a spiritual dimension with the understanding that thinking which is not informed by morality and faith can lose its direction and purpose and can even become harmful to human welfare. From the Quranic vantage point, the sciences of nature should be key to our cognition of the signs of God in the universe. For this may be instrumental in solving individual and social problems without interrupting the cosmic order and the human habitat on earth. The blatant disregard of ethical values in science has weakened scientists' sense of responsibility and contributed to the degradation of the human condition on the globe.

Since thinking is a skill that can be advanced by self-application and training, it is amenable to guidance, bereavement, and enrichment. Universities and institutions of learning in Muslim countries are generally short of resources, and those who have the means still fall short, to their detriment, of nurturing the culture of reading and research among their students and scholars. Centers of higher learning may do well to establish a new order of relationship between the natural sciences and humanities, and between all fields of knowledge and human welfare and also the avenues of benefit to society. The present-day education system is due for a reappraisal in order to instill creative thinking and breadth of vision among students and scholars that is informed by the inter-relatedness of the various disciplines of learning. This could be done, as one observer suggested, "by adding sufficient number of courses in humanities to the science and engineering curricula, by cross-disciplinary interaction and collaboration."[33] The main characteristic of the human sciences, from the Islamic perspective, is that they are not value-free and have to be incorporated within the value system of Islam that is informed by the ethical and human dimension of values.

It is ironic to note, however, that the vast majority of Muslims are wont to rote reading of the Quran which is patently vacuous and devoid of thinking. The Quran is usually read, committed to memory, and cited for its spiritual merit rather than intellectual stimulation and enrichment. This is evidently not the advice one obtains from the Quran itself Al-Qaradawi has rightly observed about the current realities of public education in Muslim countries that "the

system relies on memorization and cramming more than it does on comprehension and analysis. A typical weakness of this method is that the memorizer forgets as soon as the exams are over. But if what is learned is founded in understanding and comprehension, its substance will remain in the mind and will not be prone to oblivion so quickly."[34]

But the issue that we raise here is well-entrenched and originates in the overall emphasis that most educationists and jurists of earlier times have placed on the study of the Quran, Hadith and *fiqh* manuals, often calling attention to words and sentences of the text at the expense of comprehension and analysis. The basic approach to Quran studies thus emphasized correct pronunciation and memorization. This repetitive system of learning was particularly pronounced in the context of child education, although it was not confined to this framework as other and more advanced levels of Islamic scholarship also bore the same influence.[35]

Notwithstanding the profound influence of the Quran on the thoughts, mores, and cultures of Muslim individuals and societies, thinking by its nature does not lend itself to any predetermined framework and guideline. It seems that the Quran also seeks only to provide signs and signposts on thinking, but the subjective and innately individual bent of thinking is often inspired by imagination and insight which cannot be encapsulated by definitions and guidelines. A creative mind is unique by its attributes, and thinking that originates in a learned and upright individual is one of the greatest gifts of creation that can itself fit the description of divine example, or sign, of God on earth.

It remains to be added though that imaginative thinking has also been sparkled by sources and influences among great Muslim thinkers of other cultures and traditions—just as we note also that the great thinkers of history emerged in all regions, cultures, and religions. The substance of these statements is upheld in a renowned Hadith in which the Prophet instructed the Muslims to "seek knowledge, even unto China," and in another Hadith that "wisdom is the lost property of the believer; he is entitled to it wherever he finds it."

Knowledge and wisdom must therefore be ultimately seen as the shared achievements of humanity, endowed and posited by its outstanding and creative thinkers. This is also known from the fact that the outcomes of creative thinking are often shared and experienced far beyond geographical locales and frontiers—more so perhaps in the age of globalization.

It is hoped that the great thinkers and leaders of humanity make it a part of their agenda and commitment to narrow down the distances and divides between the intellectual and cultural traditions of the world and aspire them to the veritable vision of a shared destiny and wider human fraternity in their deliberations.

Mohammad Hashim Kamali[36]

## PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 13*

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 13* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 13*, we begin with Lesson 82, that is, Quran Chapter 82 which is the 82nd Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 84, 30, 29 and, finally, Lesson 86, Quranic Chapter 83, the last chapter revealed in Makkah.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or verses (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

## LESSON 82. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 82: THE SPLITTING APART (AL-INFITAR)

**Makkah:** *When the heaven will be split apart* (82:1)
*and when the stars will be scattered* (82:2)
*and when the seas will be caused to gush forth* (82:3)
*and when the graves will be scattered about* (82:4)
*every soul would know what it put forward*
*and what it postponed.* (82:5)
*O human being! What deluded* ***you***
*as to* ***your*** *generous Lord,* (82:6)
*He Who created thee, then, shaped* ***you*** *in proportion.* (82:7)
*He composed* ***you*** *in whichever form He willed.* (82:8)
*No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:9)
*And, truly, there are ones who guard over you,* (82:10)
*ones who are generous scribes.* (82:11)
*They know whatever you accomplish.* (82:12)
*Truly, the pious will be in bliss.* (82:13)
*And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire.* (82:14)
*They will roast on the Day of Judgment.* (82:15)
*And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:16)
*And what will cause* ***you*** *to recognize*
*what the Day of Judgment is?* (82:17)
*Again, what will cause* ***you*** *to recognize*
*what the Day of Judgment is?* (82:18)

*It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19)

## COMMENTARY°

This short chapter refers to the great upheaval, but gives it a special color. It has a different rhythm, deep and calm. It adds a touch of expostulation coupled with an implicit threat. Therefore, it does not detail the scenes of the great upheaval as in the previous chapter, where these scenes predominate. Instead the scenes here are shorter, in order to suit its quieter atmosphere and slower rhythm.

At the opening, the chapter mentions the cleaving of the sky, the scattering of the stars, the bursting of the oceans and the hurling of the graves as simultaneous with every soul's knowledge of its earlier and later actions, on that momentous day.

The second part starts with a remonstration combined with an implicit threat to man who is the recipient of abundant grace but who shows no gratitude for it. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life! And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish. Truly, the pious will be in bliss. And, truly, the ones who act immorally will be in hellfire. They will roast on the Day of Judgment. And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:9-82:16)

The final part gives an idea of how fearful the Day of Judgment is, how everyone is absolutely helpless and how all power belongs to God: *And what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? Again, what will cause **you** to recognize what the Day of Judgment is? It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:17-82:19) Thus, the chapter represents yet another way of portraying the same basic principles stressed in this thirtieth part of the Quran in various methods and styles.

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When the sky is cleft asunder, when the stars are scattered, when the oceans are made to explode, when the graves are hurled about, each soul shall know its earlier actions and its later ones. (82:1-82:5)

The violent upheaval in the universe causes the stars to scatter after they have been held together by a system which makes every star stick to its orbit, even though its movement is exceedingly fast. If this system is broken, as will happen when the life of the stars comes to its end, they will just disappear in the wide space, as does a particle of dust running loose.

The explosion of the oceans may refer to their being overfull to

the extent that they swallow all dry land and rivers. The hurling about of the graves may be a result of one of the events mentioned above. It may also be a separate event which occurs on that eventful day. As these graves are hurled about people are resurrected so as to face the reckoning and receive their reward or punishment. This is complemented by the sign which follows: *Every soul would know what it put forward and what it postponed.* (82:5) That is, each soul shall come face to face with what it has done and what it has left behind of the consequences of its actions; or, what it has enjoyed in this present life and what it has saved for the hereafter. Such knowledge, however, will accompany these horrific events. It will indeed be part of them, for it terrifies the soul no less than any of the other events.

The Arabic expression used here may be translated literally as: A soul shall know. It is, however, in Arabic a neater and more effective denotation of each soul shall know. Furthermore, such knowledge by every soul is not the end of the matter. It has consequences which are as violent as the scenes portrayed here of the great upheaval. These consequences are merely implied, not stated, and this is even more effective.

After this opening which alerts people's senses and consciences, the chapter, by means of gentle remonstrance coupled with an implicit threat, touches the hearts of men who busy themselves with trivialities. It reminds man of God's very first act of grace towards him, namely, his molding in such an upright, perfectly proportioned form. God could have easily given him any form He wished. Yet man is ungrateful: (82:6-82:8) The address appeals to a person's most noble quality, his humanity, which distinguishes him from all other creatures and assigns to him the highest position among them. This quality represents God's gracious blessing to man and His abundant generosity.

This appeal is immediately followed by a gentle remonstrance: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord.* (82:6) What makes you neglect your duties to your Lord and behave impudently towards Him when He has given you your humanity which raises you above all His creation and provides you with the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. A few details of God's generosity are then added: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7) It is an address which appeals straight to our heart. He listens to God's remonstrance as He reminds him of His grace while he continues with his erring ways and impudent behavior towards Him.

A lot may be said about every other system of the human body.

But wonderful as these systems are, the human being may have them in common with animals. He, however, is privileged to possess his unique mental and spiritual qualities, regarded in this chapter as a special favor from God. After the chapter has dealt with humanity, it mentions the perfection of his creation and the right proportioning of his mold: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion.* (82:6-82:7)

Let us reflect on our powers of comprehension, the nature of which is unknown to us. The mind is the medium of comprehension but the working of our minds and how they function remain to us incomprehensible. If we suppose that what we grasp is transmitted to the brain through the nerves, where and how does the brain store its information? If we compare the brain to a magnetic recording tape, every man needs in his average lifetime of sixty years a great many billion meters on which to record such a huge multitude of pictures, words, meanings, feelings and responses so that he may, as he actually does, remember them several decades later. Furthermore, how does man sort out individual words, meanings, events and pictures to mold them together in a sort of coherent education? How does he transform information and experiences into knowledge?

Yet this is by no means the most significant of our distinctive qualities. There is that wonderful ray of God's spirit which provides a link between us and the beauty of the universe and its Creator. As this link is established, we can experience at clear, bright moments a sense of communion with the infinite, the absolute, which prepares us for a blissful eternal life in God's paradise. Yet we have no power to comprehend the nature of our spirit, which is God's greatest favor to us and which makes us a human being. Therefore, God addresses us by this quality "O human being!" He then remonstrates with us directly: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord?* Thus, we are reminded of God's greatest favor, but we stand impudent, negligent of our duties, unashamed and ungrateful. But man does not need more than to realize the source of this remonstrance and what attitude he adopts when we stand before our Lord to be absolutely overwhelmed by shame: *O human being! What deluded you as to your generous Lord, He Who created you, then, shaped you in proportion. He composed you in whichever form He willed. No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:6-82:8)

The chapter moves on to explain the reason for our impudence and negligence, namely, denial of the Last Judgment. It emphatically confirms the reality of reckoning, reward and punishment: (82:9-82:16) The English expression, *no indeed* is used here to render the

meaning of the Arabic word, *kalla*, which is a command to desist and an indication of a change of subject and style. Therefore, the following signs are in the form of a statement.

You think that reckoning and accountability are falsehoods, and this is precisely the cause of your impudence and negligence of duties. *No indeed! Nay! You deny this way of life!* (82:9) How can any person disbelieve in the judgment and still lead a life based on goodness and right guidance? Some people may achieve a higher degree of faith: they worship God because they love Him, neither out of fear of punishment nor in hope of reward. But these people continue to believe in the Last Judgement. They fear it and look forward to it at the same time, because they hope to be with their beloved Lord. When man, however, flatly rejects the Day of Judgment he will be devoid of politeness and light; his heart and conscience are dead.

You deny the Day of Judgment when you will certainly face it. Everything you do in this life will be counted for or against you. Nothing is lost, nothing forgotten: *And, truly, there are ones who guard over you, ones who are generous scribes. They know whatever you accomplish.* (82:10-82:12) These recorders are the angels charged with accompanying people, watching them and recording all what they do and say. We do not know, and are not required to know, how this takes place. God knows that we are neither given the ability to understand it nor are we going to benefit by understanding it because it does not affect the purpose of our existence. Therefore, it is useless to attempt to explain by our means what God has chosen not to reveal to us of the world of imperceptibles. It is sufficient for us to feel that we do not live in vain and that there are noble recorders who note what we do, in order to be so that we are always alert and prudent.

We are then told of the destinies of the God-conscious and the wicked, which are determined by the reckoning based on the recordings of the noble angels: (82:13-82:16) The end is certain. That the God-conscious shall dwell in blissful happiness and the wicked shall end in hell is already determined. A God-conscious person is the one who consistently does right actions, i.e. good deeds, until doing them becomes his intrinsic quality. The adjective 'God-conscious' has connotations which fit in well with nobility and humanity. The contrasting quality, 'wickedness', carries connotations of insolence and impudence as the wicked indulge in sinful actions. Hell is a proper recompense for wickedness. The chapter emphasizes the certainty of this punishment: *They will roast on the Day of Judgment.* (82:15) Then it re-emphasizes it: *And they will not be of ones who are absent.* (82:16) They cannot escape it in the first place, nor will they be al-

lowed to leave it, not even for a short while.

Having stated what happens on the Day of Judgment, the chapter emphasizes again the certainty of that day, since it is denied by some. The emphasis provided here is in the form of a rhetorical question which enhances the mystery surrounding the object of the question. The chapter then states the complete helplessness of everyone, the absolute impossibility of giving or receiving support and that God is the absolute sovereign on that awesome day: (82:17-82:19)

The form: *And what will cause you* is a form of rhetorical question often used in the Quran. It suggests that the matter under discussion is far beyond our imagining and understanding. This is stressed here by repetition of the question before details about conditions on the day concerned are given: *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) It is a state of total helplessness when everyone stands alone, busy with their own problems, unable to think of anyone else, relative or friend. *It is a Day whereon a soul will not possess anything to avail another soul and the command on that Day will belong to God.* (82:19) He indeed reigns supreme in this life and the next. This fact, however, becomes so clear on that day that no one can overlook it, as the ignorant and the conceited do in this life.

The chapter closes with an air of fear and speechless expectation which contrasts with the opening air of violent horror. In between the two man is addressed with that remonstrance which overwhelms him with shame.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether

you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

### Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

## LESSON 83. CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

**HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?**

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 84: THE SPLITTING OPEN

**Makkah:** *When the heaven was split open* (84:1)
*and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do* (84:2)
*and when the earth stretches out* (84:3)
*and cast what is in it and voided itself* (84:4)
*and gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do,* (84:5)
*O human being! Truly, **you** are*
*one who is laboring towards **your** Lord*
*laboriously and **you** will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6)
*And as for him who will be given his book*

*in his right hand,* (84:7)
*then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning,* (84:8)
*and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:9)
*But for whoever will be given his book behind his back,* (84:10)
*he will call for damnation* (84:11)
*and roast in a blaze.* (84:12)
*He had been one who is joyous with his people.* (84:13)
*Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:14)
*Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him.* (84:15)
*So no! I swear an oath by the twilight* (84:16)
*and by the night and whatever it enveloped* (84:17)
*and by the moon when it was full* (84:18)
*that you will, truly, ride plane after plane.* (84:19)
*Then, what is for them who believe not* (84:20)
*when the Quran was recited to them,*
*they prostrate not themselves?* (84:21)
*Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny,* (84:22)
*but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass.* (84:23)
*So give them good tidings of a painful punishment.* (84:24)
*But those who believed and did*
*as the ones in accord with morality,*
*for them is compensation, that which is unfailing.* (84:25)

## COMMENTARY°

The splitting of the sky has been dwelt upon in the commentary on other chapters. (84:1-84:5) One new element here is the submission and complete obedience of the sky to her Lord: *And gave ear to its Lord as it will be justly disposed to do.* (84:2) Another new element is the stretching of the earth: *And when the earth stretches out* (84:3) This means perhaps an expansion of her size or shape as a result of a disruption of the laws of nature which govern her and preserve her in her present shape. The statement, made in the passive, suggests that this will be carried out through the intervention of an outside force. *And cast what is in it and voided itself.* (84:4) This image portrays the earth as a living entity casting out what is within her and getting rid of it.

These short signs vividly demonstrate how both the living sky and earth receive their orders and instantly comply with them. Their obedience is a manifestation of their conscious and dutiful submission. The image drawn here has shades of humility, solemnity and tranquillity that are brought out in full relief. The impression it leaves is one of humble and obedient submission to God.

In such an atmosphere of conscious obedience, we are addressed

from on high: *O human being! Truly, you are one who is laboring towards your Lord laboriously and you will be one who encounters Him.* (84:6) O humanity! your Lord has made you in a perfect way. He has given you your humanity which distinguishes you from the rest of creation. Your humanity endows you with certain characteristics which should have made you more conscious of your Lord, and more obedient and submissive to Him than both the sky and the earth. He has given man of His own spirit and endowed him with the ability to communicate with Him, receive His light, ennoble himself with God's grace in order to achieve the highest degree of perfection attainable by man. This is no little distinction.

He who is given his book in his right hand is the happy one who was true to his faith. *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9) God is pleased with him and rewards him well. He will have a lenient reckoning, that is to say that he will not be called to account for what he did in this life.

This image is the opposite of what happens to the afflicted one who has to account for his evil deeds and receives his record with reluctance. *But for whoever will be given his book behind his back, he will call for damnation and roast in a blaze.* (84:10-84:12)

So, the unfortunate one who lived his life on earth laboring hard but disobeying God and indulging in what is forbidden will know his destiny. He realizes that what lies in front of him is more suffering and hard labour with the only difference being that this time the suffering is greater, uninterrupted and endless. So, he calls destruction upon himself, for he sees his own destruction as the only means of salvation from what will befall him. When man seeks refuge in his own destruction, then he is certainly in a helpless position. His own non-existence becomes his strongest desire. His hopelessness is beyond description. *And roast in a blaze.* (84:12) This is the end from which he wishes to escape by means of his own destruction; but there is no way out.

Having portrayed this miserable scene, the chapter gives us a glimpse of the sufferer's past which led him to this endless misery: *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:14) The past tense is used here because we feel that the Day of Judgement has arrived, after this life has ended. The indulgence and the joy had taken place in this life. "He lived joyfully among his people." He cared for nothing beyond the moment he was in, and made no preparation for the hereafter. He surely thought he would never return to his Lord. Had he thought

about the return at the end of his journey through life, he would have carried provisions to sustain him. *Yea! Truly, his Lord had been seeing him.* (84:15) Indeed God has always been aware of man's thoughts, actions and feelings. God knows that, contrary to what man may think, there will be a return to Him to receive the reward merited by actions on earth. This is indeed what happens when all return to God to meet their appointed destiny, when what God has ordained will take place. *He had been one who is joyous with his people. Truly, he thought he would never retreat.* (84:13-84:15)

This image of the misery of the one who was joyful among his people during his short life on earth has a counterpart in the image of the happy one who returns rejoicing to his people to live with them an eternal happy life, free from hardship: *And as for him who will be given his book in his right hand, then, he will be made a reckoning, an easy reckoning, and will turn about to his people as one who is joyous.* (84:7-84:9)

The chapter then refers briefly to some worldly scenes. People, however, continue to overlook the evidence such scenes provide of the deliberate planning that has gone into the making of this world. Indeed, this planning includes the creation of man himself, and his phases and transitions through life: *So no! I swear an oath by the twilight and by the night and whatever it enveloped and by the moon when it was full that you will, truly, ride plane after plane.* (84:16-84:19) The oath, which is indirect in the Arabic text, serves to draw man's attention to these universal scenes. The connotations here are in perfect harmony with those of the opening of the chapter and the scenes portrayed there. The twilight refers to that period of stillness after sunset when the soul is overwhelmed by a deep feeling of awe. The heart feels, at such a time, the significance of parting with a beloved companion, and the quiet sadness and deep melancholy this involves. It also experiences fear of the approaching darkness.

What the night envelops is left unspecified to enhance the effect. *And by the night and whatever it enveloped.* (84:17) Imagination can travel far and wide as one thinks of what the night may conceal of events and feelings. But the travels of the imagination cannot capture all the images generated by the short Quranic sign, "And by the night and what it envelops." We are left with an overwhelming feeling of reverence which is in perfect harmony with the stillness and awe associated with the twilight.

This is another quiet and splendid scene: *And by the moon when it was full* (84:18), describing the full moon as her light descends over the earth. The full moon is always associated with tranquillity. The general impression formed here is closely associated with twi-

light, and the dark night as it conceals everything. The feeling is one of a complementary stillness and reverence.

This: *That you will, truly, ride plane after plane* (84:19) means, you will pass from one stage of suffering to another, as has been charted for you. The Quran uses the term 'ride', although we use the expression 'move onward', to denote the undergoing of various stages of suffering. 'Ride' is frequently used in Arabic to signify the passage through risk and difficulty. This usage suggests that difficulties and risks are like horses or mules to be ridden. Each one will take the rider to the stage determined for them. Thus each one will deliver the rider to a new, predetermined stage, in the same way as twilight, the night and perfect moon are predetermined. They eventually end with their meeting with God, which was mentioned in the preceding part. This coherent ordering of the parts of the chapter and the smooth movement from one point to another is characteristic of the superb Quranic style.

There then follows an expression of wonder at those who persist in their denial of the faith when they have all these signs and all this abundant evidence within themselves and in the world at large which indicates the truth: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21) Indeed, why do they not accept the faith? There are numerous indications in the universe and within the soul which point out that the path of faith is the right path. They are at once numerous, profound and powerful, so they besiege the heart if it tries to run away from them. But if someone listens to them, then they address him in a friendly and affectionate way.

The Quran addresses them in the language of pure human nature. It opens the heart to the truth and points out its evidence both within themselves and over the horizon. It kindles in people's hearts God-consciousness, humbleness, obedience and submission to the Creator of the universe. The expression, fall down in prostration, refers to these feelings. The universe is splendid and inspiring: it offers a multitude of signs, mental stimuli and moments of purity which combine to arouse in us a ready response and a willing submission. The Quran is also superb and inspiring; it links the human heart with the splendid universe and, consequently, with the Creator who made it. It gives us a feeling of truth about the universe which also demonstrates the truth of creation and the Creator. Therefore, the wonder: *Then, what is for them who believe not when the Quran was recited to them, they prostrate not themselves?* (84:20-84:21)

It is indeed amazing, but the Quran does not dwell on this for long. It proceeds to describe the behavior of the ungrateful and the

end which awaits them. *Nay! Those who were ungrateful deny, but God is greater in knowledge of what they amass. So give them good tidings of a painful punishment.*(84:22-84:24) The ungrateful shout, 'lies', but the object of their denunciation as lies is unspecified. In Arabic, omission of the object serves to widen the scope of reference for the verb. Thus, here we understand that the denunciation as lies is an entrenched habit and a characteristic of ungrateful. But God is fully aware of the evil they conceal in their hearts and He knows perfectly well their motives for denouncing the truth.

The chapter then halts its discussion of their state and addresses God's Messenger: "So give them the tidings of a grievous suffering," an unpleasant tiding for anyone who is awaiting news of his future.

At the same time the chapter describes what awaits the believers who prepare for their future by good deeds. This description is made in the form of an exception from what awaits the ungrateful: *But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them is compensation, that which is unfailing.* (84:25) This type of exception is known in Arabic linguistics as "unrelated exception". The believers, not originally among the recipients of the gloomy news, are then excepted from it. This form of expression serves to draw attention to what follows. The unfailing recompense is one which is continuous and unceasing, and will be given in the hereafter, when people will be immortal.

On this decisive note the chapter ends. It is a chapter of short yet immensely powerful signs.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely un-

popular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

## 84(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

### WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

### WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

## QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)

**Makkah:** *Alif Lam Mim.* (30:1)
*The Romans were vanquished* (30:2)
*in the closer region, and they, after being vanquished,*
*will prevail* (30:3)
*within a certain number of years.*

*To God belongs the command before and after.*
*And that Day ones who believe will be glad* (30:4)
*with the help of God. He helps whom He wills.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Compassionate.* (30:5)
*It is the promise of God. God breaks not His Promise,*
*but most of humanity knows not.* (30:6)
*They know only that which is manifest in this present life.*
*And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless.* (30:7)
*Or if they reflect not in themselves,*
*God created not the heavens and the earth*
*and whatever is between the two*
*but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.*
*And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting with their Lord,*
*are, certainly, ones who disbelieve.* (30:8)
*Or journey they not through the earth*
*and look on how had been the Ultimate End*
*of those who were before them?*
*They had been superior to them in strength.*
*And they plowed the earth and frequented it*
*more than they frequented it.*
*And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents.*
*Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them,*
*but they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (30:9)
*Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds*
*for those who did evil,*
*because they denied the signs of God*
*and had been ridiculing them.* (30:10)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter begins with three separate letters. In our opinion, that a number of chapters so commence served to alert people to the fact that the Quran is composed of letters they knew well, being the letters of their own alphabet and the sounds of their own language. Yet they cannot produce anything like the Quran. Indeed, it continues to challenge and defy them, and still they cannot match it. (30:1-30:7)

These letters are followed by a true prophecy that the Byzantines would regain victory against the Persians within a few years. Al-Tabari reports on Abd Allah ibn Masud's authority: The Persians won victory against the Byzantines. The Arab idolaters liked that the Persians should win, while the Muslims preferred that the Byzantines should be victorious because they were followers of a monotheistic faith, which was closer to their own beliefs.

It is also noteworthy that the opening signs giving information of future events include an interpolated sentence: *To God belongs the command before and after. And that Day ones who believe will be glad* (30:4) This statement refers all matters, in all situations, to God. It is a maxim that applies to all events: victory and defeat, and the rise and fall of states and empires. Indeed all that takes place anywhere in the universe is determined by God, and fulfils His purpose in accordance with His wisdom. Events and changing situations are only aspects of the operation of God's unrestricted will which is not subject to influence by anything or anyone. It is God alone who knows what lies beyond it and how it operates. Therefore, the best that we can do is unhesitatingly submit to God's will.

Such victory has been promised by God, which means that it will certainly come about in real life. *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True.* (30:60) For, never does God fail to fulfil His promise. The facts of the matter are that His promise issues from His free-will and absolute wisdom; He is able to fulfil it, as no power can repel His judgment. Indeed, nothing takes place in the universe except as He wills.

The hereafter: *They know only that which is manifest in this present life. And of the world to come, they are ones who are heedless.* (30:7) is another stage in the chain of creation; it is one of the many pages of the universe. People who do not understand the wisdom of creation or the law governing the universe remain unaware of the life to come, unable to give it its true measure and value. They do not realize that it is a part of the way of the universe and, as such, will never fail.

As both God's promise of victory and the certainty of the life to come are related to the truth upon which the universe is founded, the chapter takes us on a round through the universe and through the depths of our own souls. It wants people to appreciate this fundamental truth which they overlook when they remain unmindful of the life to come: *Or if they reflect not in themselves, God created not the heavens and the earth and whatever is between the two but with The Truth and for a term that is determined.* (30:8)

It is a requirement of this truth that there should be a second life when reward for action is given, with good deeds being granted handsome reward while evil ones are fairly and fully requited. Yet everything takes place at its appointed time, without a moment's hurry or delay. That people do not know the timing of the Last Hour does not mean that it will not come. The fact that its time is unknown, however, tempts those who are deluded by the little they know of the outer surface of this life: *And, truly, most of humanity, in the meeting*

*with their Lord, are, certainly, ones who disbelieve.*(30:8)

The chapter then takes us on a different round, looking deep in history so as to reflect on the operation of God's laws that never change: (30:9-30:10)

Those past generations lived before the Arab ungrateful in Makkah. They were superior in power to those Arabs, and they cultivated the earth, opened it up and discovered its treasures, and built it up even better than these are doing. They had a higher standard of civilization than the Arabs and were better able to raise life standards. Yet they confined themselves to the outer surface of the life of this world, not delving beyond it. To them also came their messengers with all evidence of the truth, but they did not open their eyes and minds to such evidence. They refused to believe and so deprived themselves of the light that illuminates the way. Therefore, God's law of dealing with communities that refuse to believe applied to them. Neither their power, nor knowledge, nor civilization were of any avail to them. They had their fair retribution: *Or journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before them? They had been superior to them in strength. And they plowed the earth and frequented it more than they frequented it. And drew near them their Messengers with the clear portents. Then, it had not been God doing wrong to them, but they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (30:9) Since they entertained evil, evil was their end. This was the right recompense for denying God's revelations and deriding them. *Again, the Ultimate End had been misdeeds for those who did evil, because they denied the signs of God and had been ridiculing them.* (30:10)

The Quran invites those who deny God's revelations to travel on earth so that they do not remain confined to their own locality. They must reflect on the ends met by those earlier communities and realize what their own end could be. They should know that God's law applies to all without favoritism. They should open their minds to the fact that humanity is one, the divine message is one and the laws that apply to all generations of humanity are the same. This is the concept the Quranic message is keen to instil in the minds and hearts of all believers. Therefore, it is repeatedly stated in the Quran.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

**DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

## 84(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism

### What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

## Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:11-30:19

**Makkah:** *God begins the creation.*
*Again, He causes it to return.*
*Again, you will be returned to Him.* (30:11)
*And on a Day when the Hour will be secure,*
*the ones who sin will be seized with despair.* (30:12)
*And for them among their ascribed associates*
*will not be intercessors*
*and their ascribed associates with God*
*will be ones who disavow them.* (30:13)
*And on a Day when the Hour will be secure*
*that Day they will be split up.* (30:14)

*Then, as for those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*they will be walking with joy*
*in a well-watered meadow.* (30:15)
*And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs*
*and the meeting of the world to come,*
*those are ones who are charged*
*with the punishment.* (30:16)
**Madinah** (30:17)
**Makkah:** *To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth*
*and in the evening and at the time of noon.* (30:18)
*He brings out the living from the dead.*
*And He brings out the dead from the living.*
*And He gives life to the earth after its death.*
*And, thus, you will be brought out.* (30:19)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter then speaks about the truth of resurrection, of which they remain heedless, when it is part of the great truth upon which the universe is based: *God begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return. Again, you will be returned to Him.* (30:11) This is a clear and simple truth, with the link and harmony between its two parts or stages also abundantly clear. Bringing back creation is the same as its origination: the two are inseparable parts in the chain of creation, while the ultimate return is to the Lord of all the worlds who initially originates then brings them back so as to remunerate them for their actions in the final stage.

As the chapter speaks of resurrection, it portrays a scene of the Day of Judgment, painting the fates of believers and unbelievers when they are returned to life. It shows the absurdity of associating partners with God and the stupidity of the beliefs of the ungrateful: (30:12-30:16)

So the Last Hour, of which some people remain heedless while others deny it, arrives, and the guilty stand in despair, with no hope of salvation. They cannot hope for even a word of intercession by the false deities they claimed to be partners with God. They are without support and without a saviour. At that moment, they deny the false deities they claimed to be God's partners.

Therefore, we see the parting of the ways between believers and ungrateful: *Then, as for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, they will be walking with joy in a well-watered meadow.* (30:15) There they receive what gives them true happiness. *And as for those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs and the*

*meeting of the world to come, those are ones who are charged with the punishment.* (30:16) Thus, we see the end of the journey and the outcome for both the believers and those who do evil.

The chapter then paints other scenes of the universe and life, highlighting some of the wonders of creation, the depths of the human soul, and miraculous events. This round starts with acknowledging God's limitless glory as the night and day succeed each other, and extolling God's praise at night and during the glorious day: . (30:17-30:19)

This glorification and praise of God *So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour and at the time when it comes to be the morning! To Him be The Praise in the heavens and the earth and in the evening and at the time of noon.* (30:17-18) are stated here in comment on the previous section that shows a scene of the Day of Judgement when the believers win the prize of entry into heaven while those who disbelieve are brought to witness their own suffering. They also serve as an introduction to the great tour that immediately follows. They thus provide a smooth link between the previous scene and the forthcoming tour.

It is a continuous cycle: *He brings out the living from the dead. And He brings out the dead from the living. And He gives life to the earth after its death. And, thus, you will be brought out.* (30:19) that never stops for a moment of the night or day at any place on earth, in space, or the depths of the sea. At every moment this great miracle occurs, but we remain heedless of it because of our long familiarity with it. Not a moment passes by without a life coming out of a dead thing, or a living being dying: a small bud shoots out of a seed or splits a stone to come into a life; or conversely a branch or a tree withers away. Still in the heap of dying plants and trees a seed or a stone is ready to start the life cycle again, and out of that heap gases spread into the air or provide nourishment to the soil that becomes fertile. At every moment life starts in a foetus, a bird or an animal. A corpse buried in the earth becomes part of the soil and gives it vapors and gases that make new life matter and nourishment for plants, which in turn provide food for man and animal. A similar cycle takes place in the depths of the sea and in limitless space. It is an awesome, fascinating cycle if we would only contemplate it with insight, guided by the light of the Quran.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

## 84(3). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING, EGO-CENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

### HISTORY

The elders of the Quraysh met for consultation. Some of them said: Muhammad is a person of fine argument. If he speaks to a person, he soon gets hold of him. Therefore, select some of your most honorable people, whose lines of ancestry are well known. Let them take their positions at every route into Makkah, at one or two day's distance, so that they turn away anyone who comes to meet Muhammad. People did just that. If any of them met a person sent by his people to find out about Muhammad, he would introduce himself to him, telling him his position among his people. He would then offer to tell him about the Prophet, saying: He is a liar who has been followed only by slaves and ignorant people, and those who are good for nothing. All wise men among his people have taken a clear stand against him. This would be enough to turn many people away. It is to this that God refers in the sign stating: *And when it is said to them: What is that your Lord caused to descend, they would say: Fables of the ancient ones!* (16:24)

On the other hand, if the person sent to find out about the Prophet is one to whom God has given insight, he would say: I am certainly a bad intelligence gatherer if, having reached so close, I am to return now without meeting this man and listening to what he says in order to give my people a true picture of him. He would insist on going into Makkah, where he would meet the believers and where they would tell him that all that Muhammad says is good and fine.

This was a well orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the Quraysh against the Quranic message. A similar campaign is organized in every generation by arrogant people who do not wish to submit to the truth despite all the evidence supporting it. Indeed the arrogant among the Quraysh were not the first to deny the truth or to scheme against it. The chapter draws for them a picture of the fate suffered by schemers before them, and their destiny in the hereafter. It shows them what they endure from the moment their souls part with their bodies until they receive their punishment in the life to come. All this is depicted in vivid images, following the inimitable style of the Quran.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
## SIGNS 30:20-30:27

**Makkah:** *And among His signs are that*
*He created you from earth dust,*
*when, again, you were mortals dispersed.* (30:20)
*And among His signs are that He created for you*
*spouses from among yourselves,*

*that you rest in them.*
*And He made affection and mercy among you.*
*Truly, in that are certainly signs*
*for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)
*And among His signs are the creation of the heavens*
*and the earth and the alteration*
*of your languages and hues.*
*Truly, in that are certainly signs*
*for ones who know.* (30:22)
*And among His signs*
*are your slumbering by nighttime*
*and by daytime and your looking for His grace.*
*Truly, in that are, certainly,*
*signs for a folk who hear.* (30:23)
*And among His signs are that He causes you to see*
*the lightning in fear and in hope.*
*And He sends water down from heaven*
*and gives life by it to the earth after its death.*
*Truly, in that are, certainly,*
*signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (30:24)
*And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth*
*are secured for you by His command.*
*When He will call you by a call again from the earth,*
*that is when you will go forth!* (30:25)
*And to Him belongs*
*whoever is in the heavens and the earth.*
*All are ones who are morally obligated to Him.* (30:26)
*And He it is Who begins the creation.*
*Again, He causes it to return*
*and this is insignificant for Him.*
*And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (30:27)

## COMMENTARY°

This great miracle is one of the signs of God's power. *And among His signs are that He created you from earth dust, when, again, you were mortals dispersed.* (30:20) It gives a strong hint of the close link between the earth and the people living on it, as it is from the earth that they were originally formed. Both they and the earth are subject to the same laws within the universal system. The great leap from the still image of dead dust to the bustling image of the highly sophisticated human being should encourage deep reflection on God's power of creation. It should encourage people to extol

God's glory and praise.

The next sign looks at the shared life between the two sexes: *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them.*(30:21) People are well aware of their feelings towards the other sex; indeed, they are often preoccupied with this relationship. Very often they are motivated to a certain action but they seldom remember that it is God who created their spouses out of their own kind and gave them emotions and feelings. He it is who has made the relationship between the two a source of physical and emotional comfort, stability, spiritual friendship, and reassurance for both. The gentle Quranic expression of this relationship profoundly inspires our hearts: *And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* (30:21)

The Quran frequently mentions the great sign of creating the heavens and the earth, but we often pass it by without reflection, although it merits long contemplation. *And among His signs are the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alteration of your languages and hues.*(30:22)

Together with the great sign of the creation of the heavens and the earth, the chapter mentions the amazing variety of human languages and colors. This must be related to the creation of the universe. Differences in climate and environment that result from the variations of the earth's position in the cosmos have a marked influence in producing such variety in language and color, despite the single origin of humanity. Scholars and scientists today note the great variety of human languages and colors but they do not relate this to God and His creation of the heavens and the earth. Instead, they undertake an academic study of this phenomenon, but do not pause to glorify the Creator who plans everything, visible or hidden. This is due to the fact that most people are devoid of knowledge: (30:7) Besides, the wonders of the creation of the universe and the great variety of language and color are only appreciated by those who have true knowledge: *Truly, in that are certainly signs for ones who know.* (30:22)

This sign: *And among His signs are your slumbering by nighttime and by daytime and your looking for His grace* (30:23) mentions certain universal phenomena and their effects on the different situations of humanity, pointing to the harmony within the great universal existence. It combines the two phenomena of night and day with people's sleep and activity in pursuit of their livelihoods, which God grants in abundance. God has ensured that their lives are in harmony with the universe: their need for work and activity is ensured by the

light of day, and their need for relaxation and sleep is brought about by the night's darkness. This also applies, in varying measures and degrees, to all living things on earth. They all find the universal system meets their needs and natures, allowing their lives to progress. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who hear.* (30:23) Sleep and movement are two conditions that are felt through hearing. Thus, the comment at the end of the sign fits well with the universal sign it discusses.

The phenomenon of lightning is part of the universal system. *And among His signs are that He causes you to see the lightning in fear and in hope.* (30:24) Some explain that it occurs from an electrical discharge between two clouds, or between a cloud and the ground, such as the top of a mountain, producing an air vacuum that gives the thunder that follows the lightning. In most cases, this is accompanied by rain. Whatever the cause, lightning is a natural phenomenon produced by the universal system God has set in operation.

As usual, the Quran does not give much detail about universal phenomena and their causes. It only uses these to establish a link between human hearts, the universe and its Creator. Therefore, it states here that one of God's signs is that He displays the lightning giving rise to both fear and hope. Both feelings are naturally experienced when lightning occurs. People fear a thunderbolt that results from lightning, one that could burn things and even people. There is also that obscure feeling of apprehension which lightning causes as people feel the presence of the great power that controls the universe. People also hope for plentiful harvests as a result of the rain that often accompanies thunder and lightning. Therefore, it is mentioned in the same sign: *And He sends water down from heaven and gives life by it to the earth after its death.* (30:24)

Moreover, when water falls on earth, it makes it fertile, allowing plants to grow, so as to make its surface come alive first with vegetation, then with animals and man. Water is the means of life; wherever it is available, life prospers. *Truly, in that are, certainly, signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (30:24) There is indeed much scope for people's minds to reflect.

The fact that the skies and the earth stand firm, following an elaborate system and moving according to plan, cannot come about except through God's will. No one can ever claim that either he or anyone else brings this about, or that it happens without a plan. Therefore, it is God's great sign that the skies and the earth stand firm and function by His command, obeying Him, without deviation, hesitation or delay. *And among His signs are that the heaven and the earth are secured for you by His command. When He will call you*

*by a call again from the earth, that is when you will go forth!* (30:25)

The final note that concludes this statement shows that all creatures in the heavens and the earth submit to God in complete obedience: *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. All are ones who are morally obligated to Him.* (30:26) Although most people are neither devout nor obedient to God, the Quranic statement here means that all creatures in the universe are subject to His will. All act and function in accordance with His laws that never fail or deviate from their set course. They are subject to these laws even though they may be ungrateful. It is their hearts and minds that disbelieve or disobey, but they are nevertheless governed by God's laws, and He controls them as He does all other creatures. They have no option but to obey and submit.

This great tour concludes by restating the essential question which people remain heedless of, namely resurrection: *And He it is Who begins the creation. Again, He causes it to return and this is insignificant for Him.* (30: 27) The chapter has already mentioned the initiation of creation and bringing creatures back to life after they had died. Now this is repeated after mentioning a galaxy of God's signs, but there is also an addition here: *And His is the Lofty Parable in the heavens and the earth.* (30:27)

His attributes are not shared with anyone else. Nothing is similar to Him in any way. *And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (30:27) He does what He wills, having sway over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of all His creation.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.

Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.

Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.

If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?

Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?

Or thought, what did he assume?

Why do people assume this?

Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

## 84(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD LOGIC (TO BE REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to

support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM)
## SIGNS 30:28-30:30

**Makkah:** *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves.*

*Have you—*
*among those whom your right hands possessed—*
*ascribed associates in what We provided you*
*so that you share as equals*
*and you fear them like your awe for each other?*
*Thus, We explain distinctly the signs*
*to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)
*Nay! Those who did wrong followed*
*their own desires without knowledge.*
*Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray?*
*And they will not have ones who help.* (30:29)
*So set **your** face towards a way of life as a monotheist.*
*It is the nature originated by God*
*in which He originated humanity.*
*There is no substitution for the creation of God.*
*That is the truth-loving way of life,*
*but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30)

## COMMENTARY°

When the human heart has seen God's great signs, gone over such horizons and looked at such a great variety of situations, the chapter then changes the tone of its address: *He propounds a parable for you from yourselves. Have you—among those whom your right hands possessed—ascribed associates in what We provided you so that you share as equals and you fear them like your awe for each other?* (30:28)

This comparison is stated in detail, step by step: You do not need to travel or make an effort to contemplate it. You do not accept that your slaves have even a small share of your provisions, let alone that they be equal to you. *And you would fear them just as you might fear one another?* You look at them in the same way as you look at partners who are free men, fearing that they might be unfair to you, or that you be unfair to them. Although none of this happens, you still suggest that it applies to God when His are the most sublime attributes in the heavens and the earth. It is a simple comparison that admits no contradiction or dispute because it is based on simple logic: *Thus, We explain distinctly the signs to a folk who are reasonable.* (30:28)

The chapter now exposes the basic reason behind this anomaly. Essentially, it is due to following one's own desires without reasonable basis or proper thought: *Nay! Those who did wrong followed their own desires without knowledge.* (30:29) Desire has no control, since it is merely based on people's whims, fleeting passions, fears,

hopes and cravings that have no rightful basis and no proper limit. This is a case of error that lacks any correcting guidance: They go astray because they follow their own desires. *Then, who will guide whom God caused to go astray? And they will not have ones who help.* (30:29)

Now the chapter directs the Prophet to remain steady in following the divine faith which is consistent and based on the pure nature God has given to people. It is a single faith that cannot be pulled in different directions, like the ungrateful who were divided into groups and factions according to their desires. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30)

This directive to follow the true faith is given at the right time and the proper place, following the great round of signs drawn from the universe and the human soul. It thus addresses hearts that are ready to receive it, while those that have followed deviant beliefs find all their arguments devoid of substance. They stand alone without support. This is the powerful authority that is the Quran and which no heart or mind can resist.

*So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) They are subject only to whim and passion, lacking control or evidence. When you set your face steadily towards true faith, you turn away from everything else. *So set your face towards a way of life as a monotheist. It is the nature originated by God in which He originated humanity. There is no substitution for the creation of God. That is the truth-loving way of life, but most of humanity knows not.* (30:30) Thus the chapter links human nature with the nature of this faith. Both are made by God, in accordance with the law of existence; both are mutually harmonious in their natures and objectives. It is God who has created man and revealed this religion so that it can regulate human life and conduct its affairs, healing man of ills and deviation. God certainly knows best what He has created. Human nature is set on a firm basis, and so is divine religion. When people deviate from the proper path of nature, only divine religion turns them back to it, since it is in full harmony with both human and universal nature. Because they do not know, they follow their desires and deviate from the true path that leads to true happiness.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?

What does it mean to be reasonable?

How would explain these signs to someone else?

Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

## 84(5). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD DEFINITIVE (TO BE PRECISE)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 30: THE ROMANS (AL-RUM) SIGNS 30:31-30:53

**Makkah:** *Be ones who turn in repentance to Him*
*and be God-conscious and perform the formal prayer*
*and be not among the ones who are polytheists* (30:31)
*or of those who separated and divided their way of life*
*and had been partisans,*
*each party is glad with what they have.* (30:32)
*And when harm afflicted humanity,*
*they call to their Lord*
*as ones who turn in repentance to Him.*
*When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy,*
*that is when a group of people among them*
*ascribe partners with their Lord,* (30:33)
*for they are ungrateful for what We gave them.*
*Then, take joy; you will know.* (30:34)
*Or caused We to descend to them*
*an authority that it assert*
*what they had been ascribing*
*as partners with Him?* (30:35)
*And when We caused humanity to experience mercy,*
*they were glad of it.*
*But when an evil deed lights on them*
*because of what their hands put forward,*
*that is when they are in despair.* (30:36)
*Consider they that God*
*extends the provision for whom He wills*
*and confines it for whom He wills?*
*Truly, in that are signs*
*for a folk who believe.* (30:37)
*So give to possessors of kinship rightfully*

*and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.*
*That is better for those*
*who want the Countenance of God.*
*And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (30:38)
*And what you gave in usury in order*
*that it swell the wealth of humanity*
*swells not with God.*
*And what you gave in purifying alms,*
*wanting the Countenance of God, then,*
*those, they are the ones who will receive manifold.* (30:39)
*God is He Who created you.*
*Again, He provided for you and, again,*
*He will cause you to die.*
*Again, He will give you life.*
*Is there among your ascribed associates with Him*
*who accomplish anything of that?*
*Glory be to Him! Exalted is He*
*above partners they ascribe!* (30:40)
*Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea*
*because of what the hands of humanity earned.*
*He causes them to experience some of what they did,*
*so that perhaps they will return repentant.* (30:41)
*Say: Journey through the earth;*
*then, look on how had been the Ultimate End*
*of those who were before.*
*Most of them had been ones who are polytheists.* (30:42)
*So set **your** face to the truth-loving way of life*
*before that Day approaches from God*
*and there is no turning back.*
*They will be split up on that Day.* (30:43)
*Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him.*
*Whoever did as one in accord with morality*
*will be arranging provision for themselves.* (30:44)
*And He gives recompense to those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*from His grace.*
*Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (30:45)
*Among His signs are that He sends the winds*
*as ones that give good tidings*
*and causes you to experience His mercy*
*and so that the boats run at His command*
*and that you be looking for His grace*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (30:46)

*And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you*
*to their own folk.*
*They drew near them with the clear portents.*
*Then, We requited those who sinned.*
*And it had been an obligation on Us*
*to help ones who believe.* (30:47)
*God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds.*
*He extends them in the heaven how He wills*
*and He makes them into pieces until you see rain drops go forth*
*from their midst.*
*That is when He lit it on whomever*
*He wills of His servants.*
*That is when they rejoice at the good tidings.* (30:48)
*And, truly, they had been*
*—even before it is sent down on them—*
*before that, ones who are seized with despair.* (30:49)
*Look on the effects of the mercy of God,*
*how He gives life to the earth after its death!*
*Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead*
*and He is Powerful over everything.* (30:50)
*And if We sent a wind and they saw fields,*
*ones that are yellowing,*
*they would stay ungrateful after that.* (30:51)
*Then, truly, you will not cause the dead to hear*
*nor will you cause the unwilling to hear,*
*to hear the calling to them*
*when they turned as ones who draw back.* (30:52)
*And you are not one who guides*
*the unwilling to see from their fallacy.*
*You cause none to hear*
*but those who believe in Our signs.*
*And they are ones who submit to God.* (30:53)

## COMMENTARY°

This section of the chapter follows its main line, looking at the universal expanse to which people's lives and events are related. It is in this great expanse that we see how the laws governing life and the universe operate in harmony with the laws of the true faith, suffering no conflict or contradiction.

God's revelations are given to the Prophet to bring life to hearts and souls. Yet they neither listen nor follow guidance. The chapter also takes us on a round in which we look at the stages of creation of humans and their lives until they return to their Lord. At that time,

no excuse or justification will benefit the wrongdoers. The chapter then concludes with reassuring the Prophet. It directs him to show more patience until God's promise is fulfilled, as it certainly will be.

These signs: (30:33-30:37) draw a picture of the human soul that does not rely on solid concepts, or follow clear lines. It thus vacillates between sudden reactions, in response to conflicting influences or events. Thus, when harm touches such people, they turn to God, realizing that only He can save them. Yet when the affliction is over, and things are comfortable again, with God bestowing His grace on them: *And when harm afflicted humanity, they call to their Lord as ones who turn in repentance to Him. When He caused them, again, to experience His mercy, that is when a group of people among them ascribe partners with their Lord.* (30:33) These are they who do not follow true faith and who do not benefit from the light it gives to the faithful. Ease and comfort remove the emergency that made them turn to God for support and protection. They forget their earlier hardship. Thus, rather than maintain the path of turning to God and of being grateful to Him, they disbelieve in His guidance and the grace He has bestowed on them.

A warning is given in the first instance to those ungrateful who opposed the Prophet's message, making it clear that they belong to this group: *For they are ungrateful for what We gave them. Then, take joy; you will know.* (30:34) It is a serious threat that sends terror into their hearts. People fear threats issued by rulers or presidents. How then will they react to a threat from the Creator of this universe, He who brought it into existence by merely saying to it: Be?

Having delivered this stern warning, the chapter questions them about the basis of their associating partners with God when it is He who bestows His grace upon them: *Or caused We to descend to them an authority that it assert what they had been ascribing as partners with Him?* (30:35) No one should ever accept anything about faith from any source other than God. So, have they received any clear, powerful argument to warrant an attitude that is contrary to belief in God's Oneness? This is a rhetorical question, one that depicts the fallacy of all types of idolatry. At the same time it serves to state that the only proper and true faith is that revealed by God, with clear sanction from Him. Otherwise, it remains flimsy, devoid of substance.

The chapter then depicts a different situation showing people as they euphorically rejoice at any taste of God's grace. In contrast, they feel frustrated and hopeless when affliction befalls them: *And when We caused humanity to experience mercy, they were glad of it. But when an evil deed lights on them because of what their hands put forward, that is when they are in despair.* (30:36)

This image is followed by a rhetorical question that wonders at their attitude and lack of insight. In both situations of grace and affliction one consistent law applies. Both are the result of God's will. It is He who bestows grace and tests people with hardship, gives in abundance or in a scant measure, in line with His wisdom. This takes place all the time, but they do not see: *Consider they that God extends the provision for whom He wills and confines it for whom He wills?* (30:37) There is no need, then, for elation at the time of grace, or for despair during times of hardship. These are situations that befall people at different times as serves God's purpose. A believer sees in them confirmation that all matters ultimately belong to God. It all indicates the consistency of God's laws in all situations: *Truly, in that are signs for a folk who believe.* (30:37)

Since it is God who grants provisions and sustenance, giving in abundance or in small measure as He pleases, He indicates to people the way in which they can make handsome profit, increasing their wealth. This is different from what they think:

Therefore, give his due to the near of kin, as well as to the needy and the traveller in need. This is best for all who seek God's countenance. It is they who shall be successful. (30:38-30:39)

God Almighty issues this directive to those He has placed as trustees of wealth showing them the best methods for investment, growth and prosperity. This means sharing with one's near kin, the needy and stranded travellers, and spending generally in ways that serve God's cause: *So give to possessors of kinship rightfully and to the needy and to the traveler of the way. That is better for those who want the Countenance of God. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (30:38)

At that time some people tried to increase their money by giving gifts to wealthy individuals, hoping that they would receive better gifts in return. The chapter tells them that this is not the way to achieve true growth: This is what some reports mention as the meaning of this statement, but it is a general statement that applies to all methods people use to usuriously increase their wealth. God also makes clear the way that ensures true growth:*And what you gave in usury in order that it swell the wealth of humanity swells not with God. And what you gave in purifying alms, wanting the Countenance of God, then, those, they are the ones who will receive manifold.* (30:39)

The chapter then discusses the issue of polytheism from the viewpoint of providing sustenance and earning a living, and how this affects their lives as it affected the lives of generations before them. It also shows the end of earlier communities and the ruins standing

witness to such ends: (30:40-30:42)

They are then asked: *God is He Who created you. Again, He provided for you and, again, He will cause you to die. Again, He will give you life. Is there among your ascribed associates with Him who accomplish anything of that?* (30:40) No answer to this question is expected. Indeed, the sign puts forward the only possible and negative response in the form of a rebuke, thus doing away with the need for a direct answer. This is followed by a glorification of God which denies partnership with Him in any form: *Glory be to Him! Exalted is He above partners they ascribe!* (30:40)

The chapter then makes clear that life situations are directly related to people's actions, and that when corruption finds its way into people's hearts, faiths and deeds, both land and sea also become corrupted, to the extent that corruption becomes the order of the day: *Corruption was manifested on the dry land and the sea because of what the hands of humanity earned.* (30:41) This spreading of pollution across the land and sea does not happen by coincidence. It is a manifestation of the working of God's laws. The reason being: *He causes them to experience some of what they did.* (30:41) They will thus suffer the consequences of the evil they do and the corruption they spread. It is hoped that when they have done: *So that perhaps they will return repentant.* (30:41) They might resolve to stop corruption and return to faith and its course of action which sanctions the doing of only what is good.

At the end of this round, the chapter warns them against incurring a punishment similar to what was inflicted on communities before them. They were aware of the ends met by many of those, as they used to see their ruins on their travels: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of those who were before. Most of them had been ones who are polytheists.* (30:42) Their fates are sufficient to discourage anyone from wanting to follow in their footsteps.

Now we have a reference to the other way whose travellers will never be lost. This leads to a different horizon which never brings disappointment: (30:43-30:45)

Taking up the true faith is expressed here in an inspiring way, suggesting full and serious commitment: (30:43) This implies full attention and clear aspiration. It looks up to a high horizon and a sublime goal. The same sort of directive was given to the Prophet in this chapter when it spoke about groups and sects with divergent beliefs. It is repeated here as the chapter speaks about God's alleged partners, increase in sustenance, corruption resulting from unbelief, what people suffer as a result of the spread of corruption and pollution, and

the fates of those who associate partners with God. Therefore, we have a statement here of the reward expected in the life to come and what both believers and unbelievers then stand to receive. The chapter warns against a day that cannot be averted. On that day, people will be divided into two great groups: *So set your face to the truth-loving way of life before that Day approaches from God and there is no turning back. They will be split up on that Day. Whoever was ungrateful, his ingratitude is on him. Whoever did as one in accord with morality will be arranging provision for themselves.* (30:43-30:44)

The Arabic text uses the word *yamhad* which is given in translation as 'smoothed a way'. In its original meaning, the word means: prepare a place of repose, or a comfortable way to follow, a cradle. All these connotations combine to describe good deeds and their role. A person who does good deeds actually prepares a position of comfort for himself, this at the same time he does such deeds, not later. This is the meaning the sign highlights. *And He gives recompense to those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality from His grace.* (30:45) Whatever anyone receives as a reward comes out of God's bounty. No one deserves heaven on the basis of his or her actions alone. No matter what we do, we do not thank God enough for a part of what He has given us. Yet His grace continues to be bestowed on the believers. As for the ungrateful, He has no love for them: *Truly, He loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (30:45)

The chapter begins a new round showing some of God's signs and how they reflect His grace as He provides them with sustenance and guidance. They recognize only parts of this, denying others. Nevertheless, they do not give thanks or follow His guidance: (30:46-30:50)

These winds herald rain. From experience, people know the winds that bring rain which raises their hopes. *Among His signs are that He sends the winds as ones that give good tidings and causes you to experience His mercy and so that the boats run at His command and that you be looking for His grace so that perhaps you will give thanks.* with this prospect of rain, fertility and growth. *And so that the boats run at His command* either with the help of rain or by causing rivers to flow and allowing ships to sail on them. Yet the ships are actually run by God's bidding, according to the laws He operates in the universe, giving everything its qualities and functions. An aspect of this is that ships are easily carried by water and they float and move, pushed by the wind, either with or against the current. With Him everything is made to measure. So that you might go about in quest of some of His bounty, on your business travels, in cultivating the land, and in business exchanges. All this is part of

God's bounty, given by the One who has created everything and perfectly proportioned them all so that you might have cause to be grateful, for His grace in all this. This comment at the end of the sign serves as an indication of how people should behave when they receive God's bounty .

Similar to sending the winds bearing good news is the sending of messengers with veritable signs of the truth: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to their own folk. They drew near them with the clear portents.* (30:47) Yet people did not receive this aspect of God's grace, which is much greater and further reaching than the wind that brings the prospect of rain. Nor did they benefit by them as they did by rain, even though their messages were far more beneficial and longer lasting. Essentially, they took two different attitudes towards God's messengers. Some of them refused to believe or reflect on God's messages and continued to inflict harm on the messengers and to turn people away from God's path. Others, who believed, recognized God's signs, offered thanks for His grace, and bore with patience the harm inflicted on them by the other group. Furthermore, they were confident that God's promise would come true. The outcome was in accordance with divine justice and in fulfilment of His certain promise: *Then, We requited those who sinned. And it had been an obligation on Us to help ones who believe.* (30:47)

No one knows the extent of such rejoicing: *God is He Who sends the winds so they raise clouds. He extends them in the heaven how He wills and He makes them into pieces until you have seen rain drops go forth from their midst. That is when He lit it on whomever He wills of His servants. That is when they rejoice at the good tidings.* (30:48) better than the people for whom rain means survival. The Arabs were the first people to realize the importance of this statement, because their lives depended on rain. Their poetry and folk stories mention it with hope and endearment.

This: *And, truly, they had been—even before it is sent down on them—before that, ones who are seized with despair.* (30:49) describes their condition before rain. In fact, rain changes their condition completely, from despair to hope and rejoicing. You see these effects in people's faces as they brighten up after being gloomy with despair, in the quickening earth, and in the liveliness affecting all.

This: *Look on the effects of the mercy of God, how He gives life to the earth after its death!* (30:50) is a fact that needs no more than that we look and reflect. It is given here as evidence confirming the resurrection when people are brought back to life. This is consistent in the Quranic argument where universal images and facts of life are

given as substantial evidence: *Truly, that! He is One Who Gives Life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* (30:50) We need only to look at the effects of God's grace on the earth to be certain of the truth of this eventuality and the fulfilment of this promise.

The chapter then describes the feelings of those very people who are happy at seeing the wind carrying water and who rejoice as they see rain bringing God's grace. What would they feel, however, if they saw the winds as yellowish in color carrying dust and sand? Such winds destroy fields and livestock, or cause plants to dry and wither: *And if We sent a wind and they saw fields, ones that are yellowing, they would stay ungrateful after that.* (30:51) Rather than submitting to God's will and praying to Him earnestly to remove their affliction, they deny the truth out of frustration and despair. This is the status of people who do not believe in God or His will, of people who cannot discern God's wisdom in what He decides, and cannot appreciate that it is God's hand that determines everything in the universe, ensuring harmony between all its events and situations.

Thus the chapter describes the fluctuation of people's desires, their inability to benefit by God's signs that they see in the universe around them, and their failure to recognize God's wisdom behind life's events. It then addresses the Prophet consoling him for not being able to persuade many of them to follow divine guidance. It tells him that this is due to their nature and blindness, which he can never cure. (30:52-30:53)

These are the ones who listen to the divine message because they have active minds and hearts, as well as sound understanding. When they listen to the divine message, they realize that it is the truth and they declare their submission to Him. They only need that their nature be alerted, and they respond.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

## 84(6). Critical Thinking International Standard Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

## Quranic Chapter 30: The Romans (al-Rum) Signs 30:54-30:60

**Makkah:** *God is He Who created you*
*in your weakness.*
*Again, after that weakness,*
*He assigned strength; again, after that strength,*
*He assigned weakness and grayness of hair.*
*And He creates what He wills.*
*And He is The Knowing, The Powerful.* (30:54)
*And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you,*
*the ones who sin will swear*
*that they lingered in expectation*
*not but an hour. Thus, they had been misled.* (30:55)
*And said those who were given*
*the knowledge and the belief:*
*Certainly, you lingered in expectation*
*by what is prescribed by God*
*until the Day of the Upraising.*
*This is the Day of Upraising,*
*but you had not been knowing.* (30:56)
*So on that Day will not profit them,*
*those who did wrong,*
*their excuses nor will they ask to be favored.* (30:57)
*And, certainly, We propounded for humanity*
*in this, the Quran,*
*every kind of parable.*
*But if **you** were to bring about any sign to them,*
*certainly, they who were ungrateful would say:*
*Truly, you are nothing*
*but ones who deal in falsehood.* (30:58)
*Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts*
*of those who know not.* (30:59)
*So have **you** patience.*

*Truly, the promise of God is True.*
*And let them not irritate you,*
*those who are not certain in belief.* (30:60)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter then takes us on a new round, but this time it is within ourselves looking at the different stages of our life on earth, before it refers to the next life and the close link between the two: (30:54-57)

No one escapes these stages. They never fail to affect anyone who survives; nor are they ever slow so as to come later than usual. These stages confirm that humanity is subject to a greater will that creates and determines as it pleases. That is the will of God who determines the age, life and stages of every creature in accordance with perfect knowledge and elaborate planning: *God is He Who created you in your weakness. Again, after that weakness, He assigned strength; again, after that strength, He assigned weakness and grayness of hair. And He creates what He wills. And He is The Knowing, The Powerful.* (30:54)

This well-regulated creation must certainly have a well-regulated end. Indeed, this is shown in a scene from the Day of Judgment that is full of movement and dialogue to bring it alive before our eyes: *And on a Day when the Hour is secured for you, the ones who sin will swear that they lingered in expectation not but an hour.* (30:55) Thus, all that has passed before that day shrinks into insignificance so as to make them swear that they had not lived on earth more than one hour. Their oaths may also be taken to mean that they did not stay in their graves for more than an hour, or that this duration of one hour applies to all their time on earth in both their conditions of life and death. *Thus, they had been misled.* (30:55) They could not make a proper estimate of their time, until those who have true knowledge tell them the right duration: *And said those who were given the knowledge and the belief:* (30:56)

Most probably the ones described as 'endowed with knowledge' are the believers who were certain of the coming of the Last Hour, recognizing what lies beyond the apparent aspects of the life of this world. These are the ones who have true knowledge and enlightened faith. In their answer, they refer the matter to God's knowledge: *Certainly, you lingered in expectation by what is prescribed by God until the Day of the Upraising. This is the Day of Upraising, but you had not been knowing.* This is the term appointed, and it does not matter whether it was of a long or short duration. The appointed time was met: (30:56)

The scene is completed with a general statement of the overall result, referring to the fate of the wrongdoers who denied the Day of Judgment: *So on that Day will not profit them, those who did wrong, their excuses nor will they ask to be favored.* (30:57) No justification will be accepted from them. In fact no acknowledgement of error or apology is sought from them. That is the Day of Judgement and punishment of the guilty, not a day of providing justification for wrong action.

The chapter then describes how the ungrateful persist in their ways, after having explained the fate of such persistent unbelief: (30:58-30:59)

There is a wide gap here in time and place, but it sounds in the chapter as if it is ever so near; indeed both time and place have been rolled back. People are again reminded of what the Quran provides by way of illustrations, modes of address, fine touches meant to alert minds and hearts, and inspiring images. They listen to it as it addresses every mind and heart in every social environment and speaks to the human soul in all its moods. Yet they continue to deny every sign. Nor do they stop at this, but rather insult those endowed with true knowledge describing them as making false assertions: *And, certainly, We propounded for humanity in this, the Quran, every kind of parable. But if you were to bring about any sign to them, certainly, they who were ungrateful would say: Truly, you are nothing but ones who deal in falsehood.* (30:58) The chapter comments on their disbelief, saying: *Thus, God sets a seal on the hearts of those who know not.* (30:59) It is in this way and for this reason that God seals their hearts. They are indeed blind, unable to see God's signs, arrogant in their disbelief, unwilling to reflect. Therefore, they deserve that God should seal their sight and their hearts.

The final note in the chapter comes in the form of a directive to the Prophet and the believers: *So have you patience. Truly, the promise of God is True. And let them not irritate you, those who are not certain in belief.* (30:60)

Perseverance is the best policy for the believers as they go along their hard, long way that at times seems endless. They must remain confident of the fulfilment of God's promise. This will enable them to remain steadfast, free of worry and doubt. Other people may hesitate, or deny the truth, or doubt that God's promise will ever be fulfilled, because they have no true knowledge and lack the means of certainty. Believers, however, must persevere, remain steadfast and confident, even though their path may seem endless, and their goal seem concealed behind thick clouds.

Thus the chapter that started with God's promise to grant victory

to the Byzantines within a few years, and give support and victory to the believers, now ends with the directive to persevere until God's promise is fulfilled. Believers are instructed to remain steadfast in the face of all the ungrateful' attempts to weaken their resolve. There is perfect harmony between the opening and the end. As it concludes, the lingering impression is that of a firm resolve and unshaken trust that God's promise will be fulfilled.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**How to Build Your Argument** from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

## LESSON 85(1). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO BE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT)
## SIGNS 29:1-29:13

**Madinah (29:1)**
**Madinah (29:2)**
**Madinah (29:3)**
**Madinah (29:4)**
**Madinah (29:5)**
**Madinah (29:6)**
**Madinah (29:7)**
**Madinah (29:8)**
**Madinah (29:9)**
**Madinah (29:10)**
**Madinah (29:11)**

**Makkah:** *And those who were ungrateful*
*said to those who believed:*
*Follow our way and we will, certainly,*
*carry your transgressions*
*while they are not ones who carry*
*any of their own transgressions.*
*Truly, they are the ones who lie.* (29:12)
*And, certainly, they will carry their own lading*

*and other ladings with their own ladings.*
*And, certainly, they will be asked*
*on the Day of Resurrection about*
*what they had been devising.* (29:13)

## COMMENTARY°

From start to finish the chapter strikes several strong notes on the meaning of faith and its nature, shaking people's hearts. In a most serious manner, it puts them face to face with the duties imposed by faith. The choice is either to fulfil these or to abandon them. The alternative is to be a hypocrite, which fact God will certainly unmask. The only way to describe these notes is to refer to the texts in which they occur. We will now discuss them fully at their relevant places in the chapter.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

## Lesson 85(2). Critical Thinking International Standard Worthiness (focussing on the important, not the trivial)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

## Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:14-29:22

**Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:14)**
**Makkah: Book 25: Noah (29:15)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:16)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:17)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham (29:18)**
**Makkah:** *Consider they not how God*
*causes the creation to begin*
*and, again, He causes it to return?*
*Truly, that for God is easy.* (29:19)
*Say: Journey through the earth;*
*then, look on how He began the creation.*
*Again, God will cause the last growth to grow.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)
*He punishes whom He wills*
*and has mercy on whom He wills.*
*And to Him you will come back.* (29:21)
*You will not be ones who frustrate Him*
*on the earth*
*nor in the heaven*
*and there is not for you, other than God,*
*either a protector or a helper.* (29:22)

### Commentary°

Thereafter, the chapter takes a brief pause to address all who deny faith, the inevitable return of all humanity to God, and the resurrection and reckoning: (29:19-22)

Moreover, the One who originates life is certainly able to bring people back after death: Nothing is difficult for God, but He gives the argument by human standards. For us, doing something for the second time is easier than the first; but to God both are equally easy. It needs nothing more than for God to will something and say, 'Be', and it happens.

The chapter then calls on people to travel in all directions and contemplate God's work and signs that appear in all creation, animate and inanimate alike. When they do, they will realize that the One

who originates life can bring it back without difficulty: (29:20)

Traveling opens people's hearts to new and unfamiliar vistas. It awakens their senses and minds. By contrast, the place where one lives very often holds no attraction or excitement because of over-familiarity. Yet to return home after a period away often rekindles passion and enthusiasm for what once seemed dull and unremarkable. This, thus, leads to new interaction and appreciation of one's immediate environs. All glory is to God, who has bestowed the Quran from on high and who has full knowledge of how people's hearts and minds function and interact with their surroundings.

In the Arabic text: *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) the order to travel is followed with a sentence that uses the simple past tense referring to the start of creation. This is significant, for we see today certain things that are indicative of the beginning of life and how the earth came to be populated with different species. Scientific excavations have formed some idea about how life started, spread and progressed, but they have not arrived at anything definite about the secret of life. They do not know how it came to be on earth, nor when the first living creature was placed on it. The order given by God, then, is to search for the beginning of life and to use acquired knowledge to learn about resurrection and the life to come.

He initiates life and brings it back. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20) He is not restricted by what people imagine to be feasible or unfeasible, possible or impossible.

Part of God's power over all things is that He punishes whomever He wills and bestows His grace upon whomever He wills. To Him all humanity return; none escapes Him and none can evade His will: (29:21-29:22)

Punishment and mercy are subject to God's will in the sense that He has given clear guidance and made the way of error clear for all. He has given man the propensity to follow either. The choice belongs entirely to man. However, when man chooses to believe in God and shows a willingness to follow His guidance, God will help him as He has committed Himself to do so. On the other hand, when he turns away from divine guidance he becomes isolated and lives in error. The two ways then lead to either God's mercy in the first case or to His punishment in the latter.

In this instance: *He punishes whom He wills and has mercy on whom He wills. And to Him you will come back.* (29:21), the chapter

uses the word *tuqlabun*, which carries connotations of violent return, to suit what follows: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) You have no power to save yourselves from a return to God. Neither your own power that you have on earth nor that of those whom you sometimes worship, such as the angels or jinn, thinking that they have power in the skies, have any effect: *You will not be ones who frustrate Him on the earth nor in the heaven and there is not for you, other than God, either a protector or a helper.* (29:22) How can there be any protection or support against God? Who could give it: man, angel, or jinn? They are all God's creatures and servants. They cannot cause benefit or harm even to themselves, let alone anyone else.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**Stage 1**

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

**Stage 2**

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!

Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

**Stage 3**
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

**Summary of Critical Thinking**:
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

## LESSON 85(3). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan, wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

## QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:23-29:30

**Makkah:** *And those who disbelieved*
*in the signs of God*
*and the meeting with Him,*
*those gave up hope of My mercy*
*and those, for them there will be a painful punishment.* (29:23)
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:24)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:25)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:26)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:27)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:28)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:29)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:30)**

### COMMENTARY°

The human being does not despair of God's mercy except when he totally disbelieves, severing all relations with his Lord. Again we are not ungrateful except when we despair of establishing a relation between ourselves and God, abandoning all hope of God's grace. The end then is well known. (29:23)

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

## LESSON 85(4). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:31-29:44

**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:31)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:32)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:33)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:34)**
**Makkah Book 26: Abraham, Lot (29:35)**
**Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)**
**and the People of Midian (29:36)**
**Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro)**
**and the People of Midian (29:37)**
**Makkah Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,**
**Salih and the People of Thamud (29:38)**
**Makkah Book 27: Moses, Korah, Haman (29:39)**
**Makkah Book 27: Shuayb (Jethro) and the People of Midian;**
**Makkah: Book 25: Hud and the People of Aad,**
**Salih and the People of Thamud (29:40)**
**Makkah:** *The parable of those*
*who took other than God to themselves*
*as protectors*
*is that of the spider who took a house to itself.*
*But, truly, the frailest of houses*
*is the house of the spider*
*if they had but been knowing.* (29:41)
*Truly, God knows what thing*
*they call to other than Him.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (29:42)
*And We propound these parables for humanity.*
*And no one is reasonable among them*
*but the ones who know.* (29:43)
*God created the heavens*
*and the earth with The Truth.*
*Truly, in that is a sign*
*for the ones who believe.* (29:44)

## COMMENTARY°

All power belongs to God. The only protection to be sought is from God. Everything else is weak, flimsy and powerless, however much it tries to inflict punishment, be tyrannical and overpowering. They are simply spiders, and what power has a spider other than the silk with which it weaves its web? (29:41)

Advocates of the divine message who are often subjected to oppression and hardship, and also to temptation and deceit, should reflect on this great truth and keep it before their eyes. They must not allow themselves to forget this even for a moment as they face different forces, some trying to inflict harm on them or even crush them, and some trying to lure them to their own line, or to buy them out. But all these forces are no more than the threads of a spider's web. This is their real estimation in God's measure. It is also the measure when compared with true faith when people have the right concept of it.

They seek the protection of patrons to whom they ascribe a share of divinity. God knows the reality of these patrons: they are no more than a spider seeking refuge in its frail web. *Truly, God knows what thing they call to other than Him. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (29:42) He alone has power over all things, and in His wisdom, He conducts the affairs of the universe.

Devoid of knowledge and clear reasoning, some ungrateful took such comparisons as material for ridicule. They said that Muhammad's God speaks about spiders and flies. They were uninspired by this remarkable description because they did not use their reason, while their knowledge too remained scanty: *And We propound these parables for humanity. And no one is reasonable among them but the ones who know.* (29:43)

This great truth, stated in full clarity, is then linked to the main truth apparent in the design of the universe. This follows the Quranic method of linking all facts to that main truth: *God created the heavens and the earth with The Truth. Truly, in that is a sign for the ones who believe.* (29:44) In perfect harmony with the rest of the chapter, this sign enhances the real link between different realities and the main truth that lies behind the creation of the heavens and the earth. It is this truth that maintains the universe according to a fine and accurate system which never fails or allows inner conflict.

These are the believers whose hearts respond to the signs God has placed in all aspects of creation. These are clearly seen in the harmony apparent in the universe. All is part of a consistent system despite its seeming diversity. It is only believers who perceive these signs and appreciate them, because their eyes and hearts remain open.

At the end of this passage, the chapter links the book revealed to Muhammad, his advocacy of the divine message, prayers and remembrance of God with the truth reflected in the heavens and the earth, and with the advocacy of the divine message ever since Noah's time.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

### WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea)

## Lesson 85(5). Critical Thinking International Standard Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

## Quranic Chapter 29: The Spider (al-Ankabut) Signs 29:45-29:51

**Makkah:** *Recount what was revealed to **you***
*of the Book*
*and perform the formal prayer.*
*Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity*
*and that which is unlawful, and, truly,*
*the remembrance of God is greater.*
*And God knows what you craft.* (29:45)
*And dispute not with the People of the Book*
*unless in a way that is fairer,*
*but with those who did wrong among them.*
*And say: We have believed*
*in what was caused to descend to us*
*and was caused to descend to you and our God*
*and your God is One*
*and we are ones who submit to Him.* (29:46)
*And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to **you.***
*And those to whom We gave the Book*
*before will believe in it.*
*And of these, the people of Makkah,*
*there are some who believe in it.*
*And none negates Our signs*
*but the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:47)
*And neither had **you** been recounting*
*from any Book before it*
*nor write **you** it with **your** right hand for then,*
*certainly, they would have been in doubt,*

*the ones who deal in falsehood.* (29:48)
*Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts*
*of those who were given the knowledge.*
*And none negate Our signs*
*but ones who are unjust.* (29:49)
*And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend*
*to him from his Lord?*
*Say: The signs are only with God.*
*I am only a warner,*
*one who makes clear.* (29:50)
*Suffices for them not that*
*We caused the Book to descend to thee*
*which is recounted to them?*
*Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder*
*for a folk who believe.* (29:51)

## COMMENTARY°

This section begins with an instruction to the Prophet and the believers to recite the book that was revealed to him. *Recount what was revealed to* ***you*** *of the Book and perform the formal prayer. Truly, the formal prayer prohibits depravity and that which is unlawful, and, truly, the remembrance of God is greater. And God knows what you craft.* (29:45) They were further instructed to attend regularly to prayer as a method of God's remembrance and to watch God who knows all that they do.

Muslims are instructed not to argue with the people of earlier revelations except in accordance with what is best: which means explaining the purpose behind the new message and outlining the links between it and all earlier divine messages. It also stresses the importance of accepting the final form of the divine message which is in full agreement with all previous messages, complementing them in accordance with God's knowledge of what suits people and their needs. There is, however, one exception to be singled out those of them who are intent on wrongdoing. *And dispute not with the People of the Book unless in a way that is fairer, but with those who did wrong among them. And say: We have believed in what was caused to descend to us and was caused to descend to you and our God and your God is One and we are ones who submit to Him.* (29:46) These have deviated from the basic belief in God's Oneness, associated partners with Him and violated the principles of His way of life. With these no argument is of use. Indeed, there is no need to maintain the same code with them. These are the ones the Quranic message fought when it established its state in Madinah.

There is no need for conflict, argument or dispute, as they all believe in one God, and Muslims believe in what was revealed to the prophets before them. It is all essentially the same. Indeed, the divine way of life follows a smooth way of progress. *And, thus, We caused the Book to descend to you.* (29:47)

This sign begins with 'thus', indicating that the revelation of the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad followed the same rule and method of revelation to earlier prophets and messengers. *And those to whom We gave the Book before will believe in it.* (29:47) In their attitude towards it, people divided into two groups: the first, composed of some of those who followed earlier revelations and some Arabs of the Quraysh, accepted it as true and believed in it; the second rejected it despite the testimony given by people of earlier divine religions that it was true and confirmed their own revelations: *And of these, the people of Makkah, there are some who believe in it. And none negates Our signs but the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:47) These new revelations are so clear and straightforward that they will not be denied except by those who deliberately shut their minds and spirits to them, refusing to reflect on them. The Arabic word kufr and its derivative kafirun, which respectively mean 'unbelief' and 'unbelievers', denote in their original linguistic 'cover, screen, etc.' Therefore, the use of the word ungrateful in this instance stresses such connotations. *And neither had you been recounting from any Book before it nor write you it with your right hand for then, certainly, they would have been in doubt, the ones who deal in falsehood.* (29:48)

Thus the Quran replies to even their most naive of queries. The Prophet had lived among them all his life and could neither read nor write. Then, he gave them this remarkable book, which was unlike anything produced by even the most talented of literary figures. They might have had a reasonable suspicion, had the Prophet been a man of literary talent. What doubt though could they reasonably entertain when they were fully aware of his past among them? Furthermore, even if the Prophet could read and write they should not have entertained any doubt about it. The Quran is its own best witness that it has no human author. It is far greater than man's ability, knowledge and world. Whenever one reflects on its statements one cannot escape the feelings that it is too powerful and too authoritative to be of human composition. *Nay! It is clear portents, signs in the breasts of those who were given the knowledge.* (29:49)

It gives clear unambiguous indications to those who have been granted sound knowledge, leaving no room for doubt or suspicion. They feel these signs within their own hearts and they are thus reas-

sured. They do not require any further proof. Knowledge that deserves to be described as true is that which is felt to be certain at heart, illuminating a person's way and leading him to what is best. *And none negate Our signs but ones who are unjust.* (29:49) These are the ones who are unfair in their evaluation of things and who stray a long way from the truth and the right path. *And they said: Why were signs not caused to descend to him from his Lord?* (29:50)

What they want are miracles like those which earlier messengers were given when humanity was still in its infancy. These serve as final evidence only to the generation and community which sees them. This final message, however, provides such evidence to everyone who receives its call until the end of human life. Therefore, its miracle is given in the form of signs of the Quran, a miraculous book which is full of wonders. It opens its treasures to all generations. It is made up of signs that are clear to the hearts of those gifted with real knowledge. As they reflect on its signs they realize that they are in fact miraculous signs and they recognize the source from which they derive their power.

He produces them when there is need according to His own plans. It is not for the Prophet or anyone else to make suggestions to God concerning the provision of any sign. The Prophet tells them this, explaining that it is alien to his manners and nature that he should make such a suggestion. *Say: The signs are only with God. I am only a warner, one who makes clear.* (29:50) I explain things, deliver my message and warn people. When I have done that, the task assigned to me has been fulfilled. It is up to God to decide what to do next. Thus the faith is presented purely, free of any confusion and suspicion. The limits of God's Messenger's task are defined so that people do not become confused with God's attributes. No ambiguity is allowed to blur his message. Such ambiguity occurred with earlier messages when the miracles shown to people became confused with myth and legend, leading to deviation from the path of truth.

Those people who demand physical miracles do not truly appreciate the great favor God has granted them with the Quran. He bestowed this from on high so as to guide them: *Suffices for them not that We caused the Book to descend to you which is recounted to them? Truly, in that is a mercy and a reminder for a folk who believe.* (29:51)

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

## LESSON 85(6). CRITICAL THINKING INTERNATIONAL STANDARD FAIRNESS (RIGHT-MINDED)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:52-29:63

**Makkah:** *Say: God sufficed as a witness*
*between me and between you.*
*He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth.*
*And those who believed in falsehood*
*and were ungrateful to God,*
*those, they are the ones who are losers.* (29:52)
*And they seek you to hasten the punishment!*
*And were it not for a term, that which is determined,*
*the punishment would have drawn near them.*
*And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly*
*while they are not aware.* (29:53)
*They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly,*
*hell will be that which encloses*
*the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:54)
*On a Day when the punishment*

*overcomes them from above them*
*and from beneath their feet,*
*He will say: Experience*
*what you had been doing!* (29:55)
*O my servants who have believed, My earth,*
*truly, is that which is extensive,*
*so worship Me!* (29:56)
*Every soul is one that experiences death.*
*Again, to Us you will return.* (29:57)
*And those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*We will certainly place them in a settlement*
*in the highest chambers in the Garden,*
*beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in it forever.*
*How excellent is the compensation*
*for the ones who work,* (29:58)
*those who endured patiently*
*and they put their trust in their Lord.* (29:59)
*And how many a moving creature*
*carries not its own provision,*
*but God provides for it and for you.*
*And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60)
*And if **you** asked them:*
*Who created the heavens and the earth*
*and caused the sun and the moon*
*to be subservient?*
*They will, certainly, say.*
*God. Then, how they are mislead!* (29:61)
*God extends the provision*
*for whom He wills of His servants*
*and confines it for whom He wills.*
*Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (29:62)
*And if **you** asked them:*
*Who sent down water from heaven*
*and gave life by it to the earth after its death,*
*certainly, they would say: God!*
*Say: The Praise belongs to God!*
*Nay! Most of them are not reasonable.* (29:63)

## COMMENTARY°

Those who do not feel any of this are the ones who demand a physical miracle so that they can accept this Quran as true. These are

blind people whose hearts do not open up to light. There is no use trying to argue with such people. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to leave a decision about them to God Almighty: (29:52)

A witness who knows all that takes place in the heavens and earth gives the best and greatest testimony. It is He who knows that their situation is false: *Say: God sufficed as a witness between me and between you. He knows whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And those who believed in falsehood and were ungrateful to God, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (29:52) They are the absolute losers; they are the ones who forego everything. They lose both this world and the life to come, as also themselves, divine guidance, God-consciousness, reassurance, truth and light.

To believe in God is, in itself a great gain, and to be rewarded for it is by God's grace. Belief provides reassurance and a steady footing along the way, steadfastness in the face of adversity, trust in God's help and protection, and confidence as to the eventual outcome. This is indeed a great gain, and it is what the ungrateful lose.

The chapter continues its discussion of what the ungrateful do. It refers to their precipitation of God's punishment, when hell draws close to them: (29:53-29:55)

The ungrateful heard the warnings but could not understand God's wisdom in allowing them time to consider their positions. Therefore, they challenged the Prophet to hasten their punishment. God often allows people time so that the wrongdoers continue their wicked and arrogant ways. He also tests the believers so that they grow stronger in faith and perseverance. Moreover, those who cannot remain steadfast when exposed to a test abandon the believers' ranks. He also allows them time so that those of them whom He knows to have goodness in their hearts recognize the truth, mend their ways and accept His guidance; or else, their own offspring may grow up as believers worshipping Him alone even though their fathers were errant and misguided. Or He may leave them a while for some other purpose of His.

The Arab idolaters, however, could not understand God's purpose and wise planning. Therefore, their challenge hastening their own punishment: *And they seek you to hasten the punishment! And were it not for a term, that which is determined, the punishment would have drawn near them.* (29:53) At this point God threatens them with the punishment which will come upon them, at its set time, but when they least expect it. Thus, it will take them by surprise and they will not be able to escape it: *And, certainly, it will approach them suddenly while they are not aware.* (29:53)

The warning of sudden punishment in this life which occurs

when least expected is followed by another censure for their continued hastening of punishment: *They seek to hasten the punishment and, truly, hell will be that which encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* (29:54) Following the Quranic method of presenting the future as though it is taking place now, the chapter describes hell as encompassing the ungrateful. To them, this is hidden behind the curtains of the future, but to God, it is a visible reality. Describing its hidden reality fills one with awe and makes their hastening of punishment increasingly singular. How could anyone hasten his own punishment when hell engulfs him while he remains heedless, deluded.

The chapter then draws an image of them as they are engulfed by hell, yet hastening their punishment: "On the day when suffering will overwhelm them from above and from beneath their feet. *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet. . .* (29:55)

This is a fearful scene, coupled with a humiliating rebuke and painful censure: *He will say: Experience what you had been doing!* (29:55). Such is the end of paying no heed to the warnings and of hastening the punishment.

The chapter leaves careless ungrateful in this scene of suffering, one which engulfs them from above and from under their feet. It moves on to address the believers who suffer persecution at the hands of the ungrateful, who aim to prevent them from worshipping God. It tells them to try to flee from persecution so that they can truly practise their faith. This is given in the form of a loving address that touches one's heart: (29:56-29:60)

The Creator of these hearts who knows all their feelings, fleeting thoughts, perceptions and ideas addresses them with love, inviting them to emigrate for the sake of their faith: These words, right from the outset give them a feeling of their true status, linking them to their Lord: Servants of Mine!'

This is the first caring touch, while the second is felt in what comes next: You are My servants, and this is My earth, which is spacious and can comfortably accommodate you. What keeps you, then, in a hostile place where you are oppressed and persecuted on account of your faith, and where you cannot worship God in freedom? Leave this narrow and restricted place and find somewhere else in My spacious earth, to enjoy freedom of worship: *On a Day when the punishment overcomes them from above them and from beneath their feet, He will say: Experience what you had been doing! O my servants who have believed, My earth, truly, is that which is extensive, so worship Me!* (29:56)

Sorrow at leaving one's own homeland is the first feeling which

stirs in the mind of one who is invited to leave his home. Therefore, these words stress closeness to God and the earth's spaciousness. Since it is all God's earth, then the place to be loved most is that where one enjoys freedom to worship God alone.

The chapter continues to address people's thoughts, and hence how we know the fear involved in emigration. The early Muslims in Makkah felt that they ran the risk of death if they tried to leave. The ungrateful were not averse to stopping them from emigrating because they felt that such emigration represented a threat to their own security. There were also the dangers that they could encounter on the way, should they even manage to leave Makkah. Therefore, the next sign addresses such concerns: *Every soul is one that experiences death. Again, to Us you will return.* (29:57)

God does not, however, leave it at that. He tells them about what He has prepared for them in their future abode. If they leave their own homeland, there are other places on earth that will welcome them; and if they desert their homes, they will be compensated with much better dwellings in heaven: *And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will certainly place them in a settlement in the highest chambers in the Garden, beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in it forever. How excellent is the compensation for the ones who work.* (29:58) At this point God urges them to do what is good, remain patient in all situations and place their trust in Him: (29:58-29:59) This should give them all the encouragement to remain steadfast when worry and fear are keenly felt and encouragement is badly needed.

When people are forced to leave their homeland another worry they entertain is that of livelihood. After all they are abandoning their homes and property, where they are familiar with what is needed and with the available opportunities. Therefore, the chapter also reassures them on this count: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) It places before their eyes the realities they see around them. Countless are the living creatures that do not know how to gather, carry, care for their sustenance or know what they need for their own survival. They do not know how to provide or store it. Nevertheless, God provides for them all, preserving them from death by starvation. He provides for people in the same way. They may think that they produce their means of sustenance, but the fact is that God grants them the ways and means to obtain what they need for their living, and this, in itself, is a favor given to them by God. They could not have obtained such ways and means without God's grace. Therefore, they should not worry about their sustenance

when they emigrate. They are God's servants, travelling on God's earth, and God will provide for them wherever they are, just as He provides for every living creature.

These caring touches conclude by emphasizing the bond with God. This so that believers are fully aware of the care He takes of them. He listens to them, knows their situation and does not abandon them: *And how many a moving creature carries not its own provision, but God provides for it and for you. And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:60) Thus ends this short round which delivers caring touches to every heart and responds to every thought, replacing every sort of worry, fear and weariness with reassurance, confidence and comfort. Believers now feel that they will never be abandoned by God, the Most Merciful. Only the Creator understands the worries that overwhelm people's minds, and none cures their hearts except the One who knows all that hearts contain.

Whenever they were asked about the Creator of the heavens and the earth, who controlled the sun and the moon, and brought rain to give life to the earth, they acknowledged that it was all done by God. Yet at the same time, they worshipped their idols, or jinn, or the angels, making these God's partners in the worship they offered, even though such beings had no share in creation. God highlights such ridiculous contradictions as follows: *And if you had asked them: Who created the heavens and the earth and caused the sun and the moon to be subservient? They will, certainly, say: God. Then, how they are mislead!* (29:61) How can they turn a blind eye to the truth and accept instead this muddled concept? *Say: The Praise belongs to God! Nay! Most of them are not reasonable.* (29:63) Certainly anyone who accepts such contradictions has no reason.

In between these questions about the great universal phenomena, the chapter states that God gives provisions in plenty or in small measure to whomever He wills of His servants. Thus, it links the provision of sustenance with the creation of the universe and all other aspects of God's limitless power. It is all done in accordance with God's knowledge: *God extends the provision for whom He wills of His servants and confines it for whom He wills. Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (29:62)

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

**Summary of critical thinking:**

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

## LESSON 85(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODY A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

### HOW IS POINT OF VIEW (FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE) DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or dis crimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

## QURANIC CHAPTER 29: THE SPIDER (AL-ANKABUT) SIGNS 29:64-29:69

**Makkah:** *And this present life is not,*
*but a diversion and a pastime.*
*And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life*
*if they had been knowing!* (29:64)
*And when they embarked on the boats,*
*they called to God,*
*ones who are sincere and devoted*

*in the way of life to Him.*
*Then, when He delivered them to dry land,*
*that is when they ascribed partners with God,* (29:65)
*being ungrateful for what We gave them.*
*So let them take joy for soon they will know!* (29:66)
*Consider they not that We made a safe,*
*holy place while humanity is being snatched away*
*all around them?*
*Believe they, then, in falsehood*
*and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing?* (29:67)
*And who does greater wrong*
*than he who devised a lie against God?*
*Or denied The Truth when it drew near him?*
*Is there not in hell a place of lodging*
*for the ones who are ungrateful?* (29:68)
*And as for those who struggled for Us,*
*We will truly guide them to Our ways.*
*And, truly, God is with ones*
*who are doers of good.* (29:69)

## COMMENTARY°

Against this backdrop of life on earth and our means of sustenance, whether plentiful or stinted, an accurate standard is provided against which to measure all values. Thus, we see that this world, with all that it provides of sustenance, comfort and pleasure, is trivial when compared with the life to come: *And this present life is not, but a diversion and a pastime. And, truly, the Last Abode is the eternal life if they had been knowing!* (29:64) When it is not viewed as a means to ensure happiness in the life to come, but felt to be, of itself, the ultimate objective and its pleasures coveted, this present life, with all that it can give, is no more than trifling play. It is the life to come that is the one that is full of life and fulfilment.

The chapter continues its outline of the ungrateful' contradictions: *And when they embarked on the boats, they called to God, ones who are sincere and devoted in the way of life to Him.* (29:65) When they are on board a ship, moving across the sea, feeling their boat to be little more than a toy pushed about by the waves, they remember none other than God. It is to Him alone that they turn for support, and only in His power do they feel that their safety can be guaranteed. Thus, their feelings and speech confirm His Oneness. They recognize this as coming from the depths of their nature. *Then, when He delivered them to dry land, that is when they ascribed partners with God.* (29:65) They forget their nature, and their prayers, reverting to their

association of partners with God.

Such deviation means they are ungrateful for the blessings God grants them, and that they ignore the upright nature and clear proofs He has given them. They will, then, enjoy their worldly life for the limited duration of their time on earth, taking little heed of the inevitable result: *Being ungrateful for what We gave them. So let them take joy for soon they will know!* (29:66) This is a subtle warning that what they will come to know will certainly not please them.

The chapter then reminds them of God's favor. It is He who has placed them close to a secure sanctuary where they live in complete security. Yet they neither remember such blessing, nor offer thanks for it by worshipping God alone. On the contrary, they try to scare the believers who live close to it: (29:67)

Those living in the vicinity of the Kabah enjoyed a life of security: they were honored by other people for the sake of God's House. All around them, Arabian tribes continuously feuded with each other, creating an atmosphere of fear. They only felt secure when they were in the vicinity of the Sacred House. It was amazing, therefore, that they made that very House a place where they put their idols and worshipped other beings. Therefore, the rhetorical question: *Consider they not that We made a safe, holy place while humanity is being snatched away all around them? Believe they, then, in falsehood and are they ungrateful for the divine blessing?*(29:67)

They certainly invented lies against God, attributing partners t Him. They also denied the truth they were given, describing it as lies. Therefore, hell is the right abode for such ungrateful. *And who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie against God? Or denied The Truth when it drew near him? Is there not in hell a place of lodging for the ones who are ungrateful?* (29:68)

The chapter concludes with an image of the other party who strive hard so that they earn God's pleasure and establish a relation with Him. They endure whatever hardship they are called upon to endure, allowing no feelings of despair to creep into their minds. They withstand every hardship and pass every test, fulfilling their duties and marching along the long, hard road to their well-defined goal. Such people will not be left alone. God will never suffer their belief and struggle to be wasted. He looks at them from on high, and He is pleased with them. He will then provide them with guidance, helping them along the road, and give them ample reward for their perseverance and good works: *And as for those who struggled for Us, We will truly guide them to Our ways. And, truly, God is with ones who are doers of good.* (29:69)

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What do you believe? How do you see things?
What reasons seem most persuasive to them?
What theory do you think best explains what their teachers are trying to explain?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

## LESSON 86. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

### THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign: *There is no compulsion in religion. Surely right judgment has become clear from error....* (2:256) that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, the use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are nc limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment

that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 83: THE ONES WHO GIVE SHORT MEASURE (AL-MUTAFFIFIN)

**Makkah:** *Woe be to*
*the ones who give short measure,* (83:1)
*those who when they measure against humanity*
*obtained full measure.* (83:2)
*Yet when they wanted to measure for them,*
*or weigh for them, they skimp.* (83:3)
*Think those not that they will be ones who are raised up* (83:4)
*on the sublime Day,* (83:5)
*a Day when humanity will stand up*
*for the Lord of the worlds?* (83:6)
*No indeed!*
*Truly, the Book of the ones who act immorally is in Sijjin.* (83:7)
*And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is?* (83:8)
*It is a written book.* (83:9)
*Woe on that Day to the ones who deny—* (83:10)
*those who deny the Day of Judgment!* (83:11)
*And none denies it but every sinful, exceeder of limits,* (83:12)
*who, when Our signs are recounted to him,*
*he said: Fables of the ancient ones!* (83:13)
*No indeed! Nay! Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what*
*they had been earning.* (83:14)
*No indeed! They will be from their Lord*
*on that Day ones who are alienated.* (83:15)

*Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire.* (83:16)
*Again, it will be said to them after that:*
*This is what you had been denying.* (83:17)
*No indeed! Truly, the book of the pious is in Illiyyun.* (83:18)
*And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is?* (83:19)
*It is a written book.* (83:20)
*Bearing witness to it are*
*the ones who are brought near to God.* (83:21)
*Truly, the pious will be in bliss,* (83:22)
*on raised benches, looking on.* (83:23)
*Thou wilt recognize on their faces the radiancy of bliss.* (83:24)
*They will be given to drink sealed over exquisite wine.* (83:25)
*Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.*
*So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)
*And the mixture will be of Tasnim,* (83:27)
*a spring from which will drink*
*the ones who are brought near to it.* (83:28)
*Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed*
*—had been laughing.* (83:29)
*And when they passed by them,*
*they would wink at one another,* (83:30)
*and when they would turn about to their people,*
*they would turn about*
*acting as ones who are unconcerned.* (83:31)
*And when they saw them, they would say:*
*Truly, these are ones who go astray.* (83:32)
*They were sent as ones who guard over them.* (83:33)
*Then, on this Day, those who believed*
*laugh at the ones who are ungrateful,* (83:34)
*seated on raised benches, they look on.* (83:35)
*Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded*
*for what they had been accomplishing?* (83:36)

## COMMENTARY°

It has been recorded that this is the last chapter to be revealed in Makkah. The chapter opens with God's declaration of war against the stinters: *Woe be to the ones who give short measure.* The Arabic term, way, used for 'woe' implies destruction and ruin. The implication is the same whether we consider this sign as a statement of a future eventuality or a curse, for a curse made by God has the same effect as that of a statement about what is going to happen.

The next two signs explain the meaning of the 'stinters' or defrauders as intended in the chapter. *Those who when they measure*

*against humanity obtained full measure. Yet when they wanted to measure for them, or weigh for them, they skimp.* (83:2-83:3) They are those who want their merchandise complete and intact when they buy, but who do not give the right amount when they sell. The following three signs wonder at the defrauders, who behave as if they will not have to account for what they gain in this life.

The fact that the defrauders' behavior is tackled in this manner in a Makkan revelation is very interesting. Makkan chapters generally concentrate on the fundamentals, such as the assertion of God's unity, the supremacy of His will and His dominion over the universe and humanity, and with assertions about the truth of revelation and prophethood, the truth of the Day of Judgment, reckoning and reward. The Makkan revelations also endeavour to form and develop the moral sense and relate it to the fundamentals of faith. The tackling of a specific issue of morality, such as the stinting of weights and measures, or business dealings in general, is a later concern; it is more characteristic of Madinan revelations, which regulate the life of the community in an the Quranic message. The fact that this Makkan chapter makes the issue of stinting its focal point therefore deserves careful consideration.

The first point to note is that in Makkah the nobility were very rich, but totally unscrupulous. They exercised a complete monopoly of trade in their business concerns. They organized the export and import trade using caravans which travelled to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer. They had their seasonal trade fairs such as the Ukaz fair which was held during the pilgrimage season. The fairs were for business dealings as well as literary activities.

The text suggests that the defrauders against whom war was declared belonged to the nobility and wielded much power and influence, enabling them to force others to succumb to their wishes. Several features of the Arabic wording used here connote that for some unspecified reason they were able to impose their will and exact in full. The meaning implied is not that they exacted their full due; for this would not justify a declaration of war against them. What is meant is that they obtained by sheer force what they had no right to demand. But when it was their turn to weigh or measure for others, they exercised their power by giving less than what was due.

Indeed this warning, coming so early in the Makkan period, gives an idea of the nature of the Quranic message. It demonstrates that the Quranic message embraces all sides of life and aims to establish a firm moral code which accords with the basic principles of divine teachings. At the time when this chapter was revealed the Muslim community was still weak. The followers of the Quranic

message had not yet won power in order to organize society and the life of the community according to Quranic principles. Yet the Quranic message demonstrated its opposition to those acts of flagrant injustice and unethical dealings. It declared war against stinters and threatened them with woe and destruction at a time when they were the powerful rulers of Makkah. It declared its uncompromising stand against the injustices suffered by the masses whom it has never sought to lull into a state of lethargy and apathy.

This gives us an insight into the real motives behind the stubborn opposition to the Quranic message by the masters of Makkah. They were undoubtedly keenly aware that what Muhammad was calling for was not merely a matter of personal conviction which demanded no more than a verbal assertion of God's Oneness and Muhammad's prophethood, and a form of prayer addressed to God and not idols. They realized that the new faith would establish a way of life which would cause the very basis of their positions and interests to crumble. They were fully aware that the new religion, by its very nature, did not admit any partnership or compromise with any worldly concepts alien to its divine basis, and that it posed a mighty threat to all tribal honor values. This is why they launched their offensive, which continued in full force both before and after the Muslims' migration to Madinah. It was an offensive launched to defend their way of life in its entirety, not only a set of concepts which have no effect beyond individual acceptance and personal conviction.

Those, in any age or land, who attempt to prevent the Qurani message from organizing and ruling human life also recognize these essential facts. They know very well that the pure and straightforward Quranic way of life endangers their unjust order, interests, hollow structure and deviant practices. Indeed the tyrannical stinters — whatever form their stinting takes and wherever it is, in money and finance, or in rights and duties — are those who fear most the ascendancy of the Quranic message and the implementation of its just methods.

The representatives of the two Arabian tribes of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazraj, who pledged their support and loyalty to the Prophet were also aware of all this. Ibn Ishaq, the Prophet's biographer, wrote: Asim ibn Umar ibn Qatadah told me that when the Madinan Muslims came to give their pledge to the Prophet, al-Abbas ibn Ubadah al-Ansari, who belonged to the clan of Salim ibn Awf, said to them: You Khazraj! Do you know what your pledge to this man really means?

They answered: Yes, we do.

His rejoinder was: You are pledging to fight the rest of humanity,

white and black alike! So it would be better to leave him alone now if you think you would give him up to his enemies in the event of your sustaining material losses or losing your leaders. If you do such a thing you will bring upon yourselves great humiliation both in this life and in the life hereafter. But if you feel that you will honor your pledges despite any sacrifice in money and men, then go ahead, because this will be best for you here and in the hereafter!

They said: We offer our loyalty and support and declare our readiness to sustain any sacrifice, material or personal!

Turning to the Prophet, they asked him: What will be our reward if we honor our pledges?

He said: Heaven.

They said: Stretch out your hand.

He did and they gave him their pledges of support.

These supporters, like the Makkan tyrants, were keenly aware of the nature of the Quranic message. They realized that it stands for absolute justice and fairness in the social order it seeks to create. It accepts no tyranny, oppression, conceit, injustice or exploitation. Therefore, it faces the combined forces of all forms of despotism, arrogance and exploitation.

Their attitude is singularly strange. (83:4-6) The mere idea of being raised to life again on that great day, when all humanity shall stand as ordinary individuals in front of the Lord of the universe, awaiting His just judgment, without support from any quarter, should be enough to make them change course. But they persist, as if the thought of being raised to life after death has never crossed their minds.

They are called ones who give short measure in the first part of the chapter; but in the second they are described as transgressors. The chapter proceeds to describe the standing of this group with God, their situation in this life, and what awaits them on the great day. (83:7-83:17) They think they will not be raised to life after death, so the Quran rebukes them and affirms that a record of their actions is kept.

The location of that record is specified as an additional confirmation of the fact, albeit a location unknown to man. They are threatened with woe and ruin on that day when their record shall be reviewed: (83:7-83:10)

The transgressors, as the Arabic term here connotes, are those who indulge excessively in sin. Their book is the record of their deeds. We do not know the nature of this book and nor are we required to know. The whole matter belongs to that realm of which we know nothing except what we are told by God. The statement that

there is a record in Sijjin of the transgressors' deeds, is followed by the familiar Quranic form of expression associated with connotations of greatness: *And what will cause you to recognize what Sijjin is?* (83:8) Thus, the addressee is made to feel that the whole matter is too great to be fully understood.

The chapter then gives a further account of the transgressors' book: *It is a written book.* (83:9) There is no possibility of addition or omission until it is thrown open on that great day. When this takes place: *Woe on that Day to the ones who deny.* (83:10) Then we are given information about the subject of unbelief, and the true character of the ungrateful who deny the Day of Judgment. (83:12-83:13) So, aggression and bad deeds lead the perpetrators to deny the Day of Judgment and to take a rude and ill-mannered attitude towards the Quran, describing it as: Fables of the ancients! This description by the ungrateful is, of course, based on the fact that the Quran contains some historical accounts of former nations. These accounts are related as a lesson for later generations as they demonstrate with much clarity the working of the divine rules to which all nations and generations are subject.

They are strongly rebuked and reprobated for their rudeness and rejection of the truth. These connotations, carried by the Arabic term kalla, translated here as 'No indeed', are coupled with an assertion that their allegations are unfounded. We are then given an insight into the motives of their insolent disbelief and the reasons for their inability to see the obvious truth or respond to it: *No indeed! Nay. Their hearts will be overcome with rust from what they had been earning.* (83:14) Indeed the hearts of those who indulge in sin become dull, as if they are veiled by a thick curtain which keeps them in total darkness, unable to see the light. Thus they gradually lose their sensitivity and become lifeless.

Thus we have learnt the situation of transgressing ungrateful, as well as their motives for transgression and rejection of the truth. Then we are told what will happen to them on that great day, a destiny which befits their evil deeds and denial of the truth: (83:15-83:17) Because their sins have cast a thick veil over their hearts, they are unable in this life to feel God's presence, and it is only appropriate that they not be allowed to see His glorious face. They will be deprived of this great happiness, which is bestowed only on those whose hearts and souls are so clean and transparent that they deserve to be with their Lord, without any form of separation or isolation.

This separation from their Lord is the greatest and most agonizing punishment and deprivation. It is a miserable end of a man whose very humanity is derived from only one source, namely his contact with God, his benevolent Lord. When man is torn away from this source of nobleness he loses all his humanity and sinks to a level

which ensures hell is his just reward: *Truly, again, they will be ones who roast in hellfire.* (83:16) On top of this, there is something much worse and much more agonizing, namely, rebuke. *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17)

Then follows an account of the other group, the God-conscious. This is given in the customary Quranic manner of providing two elaborately contrasting images, so that a detailed comparison may be drawn: (83:18-83:28)

This section of the chapter starts with the Arabic term, kalla, which connotes strong reproach and a firm command to the transgressors to desist from their rejection of the truth. It then proceeds to speak about the God-conscious. Since the record of the transgressors is in Sijjin, that of the God-conscious is in Illiyun. The term 'God-conscious' refers to the obedient who do good. They are the exact opposite of the transgressors, who indulge in every excess. The name Illiyun connotes elevation and sublimity, which suggests that Sijjin is associated with baseness and ignominy. The name is followed by the form of exclamation often used in the Quran to cast notions of mystery and grandeur: *And what will cause you to recognize what Illiyyun is?* (83:19)

The chapter then states that the book of the God-conscious is: *t is a written book. Bearing witness to it are the ones who are brought near to God.* (83:20-83:21) We have already stated what is meant by 'a record inscribed.' We are told here that the angels closest to God see this book and witness it. This statement gives the feeling that the record of the God-conscious is associated with nobility, purity and sublimity. The angels closest to God look at it and enjoy its description of noble deeds and glorious characteristics. The whole image provides evidence of the honor the God-conscious receive.

There follows an account of the situation in which the God-conscious find themselves. We are told of the bliss they enjoy on that great day: *Truly, the pious will be in bliss.* (83:22) This contrasts with hell, in which the transgressors dwell. *On raised benches, looking on.* (83:23) This means that they are given a place of honor. They look wherever they wish. They do not have to look down, out of humility; and they suffer nothing which distracts their attention. The description here represents to the Arabs, who were the first to be addressed by the Quran, the highest form of comfort and luxury.

In their bliss, the God-conscious live in mental and physical comfort. Their faces are radiant with unmistakable joy: (83:24-83:26) Their drink is absolutely pure without any unwanted additions or particles of dust. Describing it as securely sealed with musk indicates, perhaps, that it is ready made in secured containers to be

opened when refreshment is needed. All this adds to the impression of meticulous care being taken. The fact that the seal is of musk also adds an element of elegance and luxury. The whole picture, however, is understood only within the limits of human experience in this world.

In the life to come people will have different concepts, tastes and standards which will be free from all the bonds of this limited world.

The description is carried further in the following two signs: *And the mixture will be of Tasnim, a spring from which will drink the ones who are brought near to it.* (83:27-83:28) o, this pure, securely sealed drink is opened and mixed with a measure of the water from a fountain called Tasnim and described as the one from which the favored who are close to God drink. Before this last part of the description is given we are also given a significant instruction: *Its seal will have the lingering smell of musk.* (83:26)

Those stinters who defraud their fellow men pay no regard to the Day of Judgement, and, worse still, deny that such a Day of Reckoning will come. Hardened by their sins and excesses, they strive endlessly for the petty riches of this world. Each of them tries to outdo the others and gain as much as possible. Therefore, he indulges in all types of injustice and vice for the sake of ephemeral luxuries. It is the other type of luxury and honor which deserves emulous striving: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

Those who strive for an object of this world, no matter how superb, grand or honorable it is, are in reality striving for something hollow, cheap and temporary. This world, in its totality, is not worth, in God's view, one mosquito's wing. It is the hereafter which carries real weight with Him. So, it should be the goal for strenuous competition and zealous striving.

It is remarkable that striving for the hereafter elevates the souls of all strivers, while competition for worldly objects sinks the competitors' souls to the lowest depths. As we work continuously to achieve the happiness of the hereafter, our work makes this world a happy and pure one for everybody. On the other hand, efforts made for the achievement of worldly ends turn this world into a filthy marsh, where animals devour one another and insects bite the flesh of the God-conscious.

Striving for the hereafter does not turn the earth into a barren desert, as some transgressors imagine. The Quranic message considers this world a farm, and the hereafter its fruits. It defines the role of the true believer as the building of this world while following the path of piety and God-consciousness. The Quranic message stipu-

lates that we must look on our task as an act of worship that fulfils the purpose of his existence as defined by God: The statement: For this let the strivers emulously strive, inspires man to look far beyond this finite, little world, as he sets out to fulfil his mission as God's vicegerent on earth. Thus as they work on purifying the filthy marsh of this world their souls are elevated to new heights.

Our life on earth is limited while his future life is of limitless duration. The luxuries of this world are also limited while the happiness of paradise is much too great for us to conceive. The elements of happiness in this life are well known to everyone, but in the next world they are on a level befitting a life everlasting.

What comparison can then hold between the two spheres of competition or the two goals, even when we apply the human method of balancing losses against profits? It is, indeed, one race and a single competition: *So for that, then, the ones who strive, strive.* (83:26)

The beatitude enjoyed by the God-conscious is discussed at length in order to give a detailed account of the hardships, humiliation and insolence they are made to suffer at the hands of the transgressors. The final comment of the chapter taunts the ungrateful as they behold the God-conscious enjoying heavenly bliss: (83:29-83:36)

The images portrayed by the Quran of the evildoers' derision of the faithful, their rudeness and insolence, and their description of the faithful, as having 'gone astray' are taken directly from Makkan life at the time. But the same actions happen over and over again in all ages and places. Many people in our own age have witnessed similar actions, and it is as if the chapter was revealed to describe what they see with their own eyes. This proves that the attitude of the transgressors and the evildoers to the believers hardly ever changes from one country to another or from one period of time to another.

In the Arabic original, the past tense is used here so as to take us away from this world to the hereafter to see the God-conscious in their bliss while we also hear what happened to them in this world. *Truly, those who sinned—at those who believed—had been laughing.* (83:29) The believers were made to suffer ridicule and derision by the transgressors, either because they were poor or weak or because their self-respect would not allow them to return the abuse of base evildoers. What a contrast: the evildoers persecute the believers and laugh at them shamelessly while the believers stick to dignified self respect and perseverance.

They wink at one another: *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another* (83:30) or make certain actions intended as mockery and derision. Such behavior betrays their baseness and

bad manners. They try to make the believers feel embarrassed and helpless. *And when they passed by them, they would wink at one another.* When they have nourished their evil, little minds with such mockery and injurious actions they go back to their own folk to continue their laughter and derision. They are satisfied with what they have done. Although they have sunk to the lowest depths, they cannot imagine how contemptible they are.

This is even more singular! *And when they saw them, they would say: Truly, these are ones who go astray.* (83:32) Nothing is more absurd than that those transgressors should speak about right and error, or that they should say that the believers have gone astray. Transgression knows no limits. The transgressors never feel ashamed of what they do or say. Their description of the believers as having gone astray is a clear manifestation of this fact. The Quran does not try to defend the believers or refute the evil accusation levelled at them, because it is not worth refuting. It laughs loudly, however, at those who involve themselves impudently in something which does not concern them: *They were sent as ones who guard over them.* (83:33) No one has asked them to look after the believers, or to watch over them, or to assess their situation. So why do they give their unsolicited opinion?

This sarcasm concludes the narration of what the transgressors do in this life. The chapter relates it as if it is something of the past, and gives an image of the present, i.e. in the hereafter, when the believers rejoice in their heavenly bliss: (83:34-83:35)

On that day the ungrateful will be shut out from their Lord, suffering isolation combined with the torture of hell when they are told: *Again, it will be said to them after that: This is what you had been denying.* (83:17) At the other end of the scale, the believers recline on couches, in total beatitude, partaking of a pure drink which is secured with a seal of musk and mixed with the waters of Tasnim. As the chapter draws the two images, it shows how the tables are turned; for then it is the believers who laugh at the ungrateful.

The chapter concludes with another loud, ironic question: *Were the ones who are ungrateful not rewarded for what they had been accomplishing?* (83:36) Their requital is not a good one, as the term used here connotes. For we have just been given an image of their doom, which is described here sarcastically, as their reward.

The scene of the evildoers' ridicule of the believers merits further discussion. It is portrayed in considerable detail, in the same way as the earlier scene of the God-conscious in heavenly bliss. This detailed description is highly artistic. It also has a marked psychological effect which is at once soothing, comforting and reassuring. The

Muslim minority in Makkah was facing a sustained, demoralizing onslaught by the ungrateful, but God did not leave the Muslims on their own: He comforted them and urged them to persevere.

They are comforted by the very fact that their sufferings are outlined by God in detail. He sees what the believers suffer and does not ignore what He sees, although He may let the ungrateful do as they wish, if only for a while. He also sees how the transgressors laugh unrepentantly at the sufferings of the faithful. Since He describes all this in the Quran then He must take it into account. This, in itself, is enough consolation for the believers.

There are also those scornful remarks about the evildoers. They may go unnoticed by the ungrateful because their indulgence in their sinful practices have made them insensitive. The highly sensitive hearts of the believers, however, are touched and comforted by them.

It must be noted that the only consolation offered by God to the believers who were subjected to harsh treatment and painful ridicule was heaven for the believers and hell for the ungrateful. This, again, was the only promise the Prophet made to the believers when they pledged all their property as well as their lives for the cause of the Quranic message. Victory in this life was never mentioned in the Makkan Quranic revelations as a consolation or as an incentive to persevere. The Quran was instead cultivating the hearts of the believers, and preparing them to fulfil the task with which they were entrusted. It was necessary that such hearts attain a high standard of strength and self-denial so that they would give everything and suffer all hardship without looking for anything in this life. They were to seek only the reward of the hereafter and to win God's pleasure. They were prepared to go through life suffering all sorts of hardship and deprivation with no promise of reward in this life, not even victory for the cause of the Quranic message.

Such a group of people must be first established. When this happens and God knows that they are sincere and determined in what they have pledged themselves to do, then He will give them victory in this life. Victory will not be theirs as a personal reward. They will be given power as trustees appointed for the implementation of the Quranic way of life. They will be worthy trustees because neither were they promised nor did they look for any worldly gain. They pledged themselves truly to God at a time when they were unaware of any worldly benefit that may befall them except that they would win God's pleasure.

All the Quranic signs which speak of victory were revealed later in Madinah when this was no longer an issue. Victory was given because God willed that successive human generations should have an

actual, definite and practical example of the Quranic way of life. It was not a reward for sacrifices made or hardships suffered.

## Student Assessment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor in tensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.

I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

# APPENDIX 1
# SIGNS REVEALED IN MAKKAH AND PLACED IN MADINAH CHAPTERS
## SIGNS 8:30-8:36

MAKKAH: *And mention when those who were ungrateful*
*plan against you to bring you*
*to a standstill or to kill you*
*or to drive you out.*
*And they plan and God plans,*
*but God is Best of the ones who plan.* (8:30)
*And when Our signs are recounted to them,*
*they said: We heard this. If we will,*
*we would say the like of this.*
*Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.* (8:31)
*And when they said: O God!*
*Truly, if this had been The Truth from Thee,*
*rain down rocks on us from heaven*
*or bring us a painful punishment.* (8:32)
*But God had not been punishing them*
*with you among them.*
*Nor had God been One Who Punishes them*
*while they ask for forgiveness.* (8:33)
*And what is with them*
*hat God should not punish the*
*while they bar worshipers from the Masjid al-Hara*
*and they had not been its protectors:*
*Truly, its protectors are but ones who are God-conscious*
*except most of them know not.* (8:34)
*Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing*
*but whistling and clapping of hands.*
*So experience the punishment*
*because you had been ungrateful.* (8:35)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth*
*so that they bar the way of God.*
*They will spend it.*
*Again, it will become a regret for them.*
*Again, they will be vanquished.*
*And those who were ungrateful*
*will be assembled in hell.* (8:36)

## COMMENTARY°

These signs continue the Quranic address showing glimpses from the past and compares them with the present. It paints a scene showing a great gulf between the two situations for the benefit of the Muslim community. Thus Muslims are able to appreciate God's grace as manifested in what He had planned for them.

In the present passage, the signs describes the attitude of the ungrateful as they scheme against God's Messenger shortly before his departure to Madinah. They turn away from God's revelations, claiming that they could produce something similar if they so wished. Their attitude is so stubborn that they appeal for God's punishment to come sooner if Muhammad's message from God is true. They prefer this to accepting it and following its guidance. The passage also includes a reference to the fact that they allocate their resources so as to turn people away from God's guidance and pool their money in order to launch an onslaught on God's Messenger. They are warned that all their efforts will end in total failure in this life, and then they will be driven to hell in the life to come. Loss in both worlds will be the result of their scheming and plotting.

Ultimately God directs the Messenger to confront the ungrateful with a choice between two alternatives. The first is that they stop their stubborn denial of the truth and their hostility to God and His Messenger, in which case God will forgive them all the sins and evil deeds they committed in the past. Alternatively, they continue with their attitude, in which case the fate that engulfed earlier communities will befall them too. They will then suffer the punishment God will determine for them.

### A SCHEME TO PUT AN END TO THE QURANIC MESSAGE

*And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.*(8:30) This is a reminder of the situation in Makkah before things underwent a total transformation. This reminder serves also as a reassurance concerning the future, and draws attention to the wisdom behind the operation of God's will. Those Muslims who were the first to be addressed by the Quran were fully aware of both situations, having experienced both. A reminder of their immediate past, as well as the fear and worry they experienced in those days, was sufficient to make them appreciate the safety and security of the present. They were aware of the ungrateful' scheming and what they planned to do with the Prophet. But not only their schemes were totally foiled; the ungrateful also suffered a humiliating defeat.

The ungrateful were considering alternatives: they thought of arresting God's Messenger and putting him in chains until he died,

and they also considered killing him so that they could get rid of him once and for all. They also thought of driving him away, sending him into exile. Having considered the pros and cons of each of these alternatives, they chose to kill him, entrusting the task to a number of young men, each belonging to a different tribe, so that all tribes would share in his assassination. His own clan, Hashim, would thus be unable to fight all the Arabs at once. They would then accept an offer of blood money and the whole matter would finish at that.

Commenting on this sign, Imam Ahmad relates on the authority of Abd Allah ibn Abbas: The Quraysh were in consultation one night in Makkah. Some of them suggested that the following morning they should put the Messenger in chains; but others suggested that they should kill him, while still others suggested that it was sufficient to have him banished. God revealed to the Messenger what they were scheming. That night, Ali slept in the Prophet's bed, while the Messenger moved out of the city until he reached the cave. The ungrateful spent the night watching Ali, but thinking him to be the Prophet. In the morning, they rushed to him, but instead they discovered Ali sleeping in his bed. They realized that their scheming had been foiled. They asked him: Where is your companion? He answered: I do not know. They traced his footsteps, but when they reached the mountain, they could no longer distinguish his trace. They climbed up the mountain and passed by the cave and saw that spiders had weaved their webs over its entrance. They thought that if he had gone into the cave, there would be no spider's web at the entrance. All in all he stayed in that cave three nights."

*And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan.*(8:30) These words paint a picture that leaves a profound effect, particularly when we stretch our minds to imagine that meeting of Quraysh idolaters and how they held their consultations discussing alternatives, looking at the advantages and disadvantages of every suggestion that was put forward. Yet, God Almighty was fully aware of all they said and decided. He rendered their schemes futile, but they were totally unaware of His planning. The whole scene is full of acute irony. But it is at the same time an awe-inspiring scene. How could those human beings, weak and clumsy as they were, be compared to God? Could anything they devised be compared to His design, able as He is to accomplish every purpose of His? The Quranic style paints this image in the same inimitable method of the Quran, bringing it alive so that it shakes hearts and set minds thinking.

After this brief but highly suggestive reference to the scheming of the Quraysh and what they plotted against the Prophet, the sign moves on to describe the attitude of the ungrateful, their deeds, fab-

rications and claims. They went as far as claiming they were able to produce something similar to the Quran, if only they chose to do so. At the same time, they described the Quran as fables of the ancients. (8:31) *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.*

**Feeble Maneuvers**

In his commentary on the Quran, Ibn Kathir mentions that the person who said this was al-Nadr ibn al-Harith: Al-Nadr had been to the Persian Empire where he learnt Persian history and read accounts of past Persian kings, such as Rustam and Isfandiyar. When he returned home, he saw God's Messenger after he had been entrusted with God's message, and he listened to him reciting the Quran to people. When the Messenger finished talking to any group of people, al-Nadr would sit with them and tell them stories of those ancient kings. He would then ask them: Tell me, by God, who tells better stories: I or Muhammad?' Therefore, when he fell captive on the day of the Battle of Badr, the Messenger ordered that he should be executed. His order was carried out, thank God.

It was in reference to al-Nadr and what he used to say about the Quran that this sign was revealed: *And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones.* (8:31)

The ungrateful' claims that the Quran was nothing but the tales of ancient people is mentioned several times in the Quran. In another place we read: *And they say: Fables of the ancient ones that he has caused to be written down! And they are to be related from memory to him at early morning dawn and at eventide.* (25:5)

This was only one episode in a chain of maneuvres which they attempted in order to resist the Quran and stop its profound effect. They realized that the Quran put its address to human nature, based on the truth implanted in its very constitution. Therefore, its response was bound to be positive. It confronted minds with its overpowering authority and they yielded to its irrefutable logic. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh concocted some maneuvre which they knew to be without foundation. Nevertheless, they tried to find in the Quran something similar to the fables and legends of ancient communities in order to spread confusion among the masses. Their aim was simply to maintain their sway over those masses.

Those elders of the Quraysh recognized the nature of the Quranic message, because they were fully aware of the meaning of its terms and expressions in their language.

They recognized that the declaration, 'there is no god but God,

and the Messenger is God's Messenger,' signified a rebellion against all human authority, a complete rejection of the sovereignty of human beings and an acknowledgement that all sovereignty belonged to God alone. It also signified that putting such submission into practice meant following the teachings of Prophet Muhammad, God's Messenger, to the exclusion of all those who claimed to speak for God. They were aware that those of them who made that declaration rebelled immediately against the Quraysh's authority, leadership and sovereignty. Without hesitation, they joined the community led by the Prophet, acknowledging his authority. They no longer entertained any feeling of loyalty to family, clan, tribe, leadership or human authority. All their loyalty was given to this new leadership and the community under its care.

This is certainly the true significance of the declaration that there is no god other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This was a reality witnessed by the elders of the Quraysh who recognized the threat it constituted to their social, political, economic and religious set-up. The new Muslims' declaration did not have the hollow and feeble significance demonstrated by those who nowadays claim to be Muslims. They make such a claim only because they repeat this declaration verbally and offer some worship rituals. However, they pay little heed to the fact that God's Lordship no longer has any practical significance in human life, since human beings allow man-made laws and ignorant leadership to conduct and manage all society affairs.

It is true that in Makkah, the Messenger had neither a legal code to put forward nor a state to implement such a code, had it been there. However, those who made the declaration that brought them into the fold of the Quranic message immediately acknowledged the leadership of the Messenger and gave all their loyalty to the Muslim community. They rebelled against the leadership of the Arabian *jahiliyyah* society, and disclaimed any loyalty to family, clan, tribe, etc. Therefore, their declaration had its true political significance.

This was indeed what worried the Quraysh's elders as they recognized the threat posed by the Quranic message.

In earlier days, they were not at all worried when some individuals of foresight disowned the beliefs and rituals of the ungrateful, declaring that they believed in God's Oneness and worshipped Him alone. Those individuals disowned all idolatry, offering no worship ritual to any of the Arabian idols. If the whole matter is confined to this, those who wield authority in any *jahiliyyah* society would not care, because they do not see any threat to their authority in mere beliefs and worship rituals.

## A SOPHISTICATED VERSION OF AN OLD PLOY

A fable is an old tale that includes some superstitious beliefs about deities and the supernatural courage of legendary heroes. It speaks of imaginary events that involve so much superstition.

Those Quraysh elders referred to the accounts given in the Quran of earlier nations and communities, the miracles shown to them and to the Quranic descriptions of how God destroyed the ungrateful and saved the believers and said to the masses that such accounts were only fables of ancient people. They alleged that the Messenger had it all written down in order to relate the same to the Arabs in Makkah, claiming that they had been revealed to him by God. Al-Nadr ibn al-Harith would take the Prophet's place after he had finished speaking to people, and would relate to them fables and legends which he had learnt on his travels in Persia. At times, al-Nadr would even have a group of people in a circle sitting next to the group addressed by the Prophet. He would then say to his audience: These legends are similar to the fables related by Muhammad, but I do not claim to be a Prophet or to receive any revelations. His are all fables and legends of the same type.

However, such matters did not last long in Makkah. These ploys were seen for what they really were. With its overpowering logic and profound truth that directly appealed to human nature, the Quran could easily overcome all such ploys and maneuvres. Nothing of them was able to resist the Quran in any way. Therefore, the elders of the Quraysh were in terrible fear and called on all their followers: *And those who are ungrateful said: Hear not this, the Quran, but talk idly about it while it is being recited so that perhaps you would prevail.* (41:26) But their leaders, such as Abu Sufyan, Abu Jahl and al-Akhnas ibn Shariq went secretly at night, each on his own, to listen to the Quran being recited. None of them could bring himself to refrain from being there night after night, to listen to the Messenger as he recited God's revelations. Each one of them thought he was totally alone. When they discovered each other, they made a firm pledge of honor not to do it again. They feared that they would be seen by young people who would then listen to the Quran and accept the Quranic message.

Al-Nadr's attempt to attract people's attention to his stories in order to turn them away from the Quran was not the last of its kind. It was repeated in different shapes and forms, and it will continue to be repeated. In our present times, the enemies of this faith have also tried to turn people's attentions away from the Quran. But when they realize that all their attempts end in failure, they try to reduce the Quran to a collection of hymns that reciters sing to enchant their au-

dience.

## NO LIMIT TO HUMAN FOLLY

The signs goes on to describe an attitude of most amazing stubbornness by the ungrateful. They try to wrestle with the truth and they are defeated. Pride, however, prevents them from acknowledging the truth and its authority or submitting to it. Therefore, they appeal to God to rain down stones over them or to smite them with grievous suffering, if the Quran were the truth revealed by Him. Instead of praying to God to guide them to the truth and enable them to follow it, they pray for their own undoing: *And when they said: O God! Truly, if this had been The Truth from You rain down rocks on us from heaven or bring us a painful punishment.* (8:32)

This is certainly a very strange appeal which betrays a state of unwavering stubbornness that prefers total ruin to yielding to the truth, even when it is the absolute truth. When sound human nature experiences doubt, it prays to God to show it the truth and guide it to it. Sound human nature does not find that at all demeaning. But when it is corrupted by uncontrolled pride, arrogance drives it into sin to the extent that it prefers suffering and ruin to acknowledging the truth when it becomes clear, irrefutable. It is with this type of obstinacy that the ungrateful in Makkah resisted the Prophet's message. But this message was victorious in the end, despite such persistent obstinacy.

The chapter makes it clear that they certainly deserved that stones be rained on them from the skies, or that painful suffering be inflicted on them, just as they had prayed for. Nevertheless, God willed not to inflict on them the type of extermination He had inflicted on earlier communities. This is because God's Messenger was still in their midst, calling on them to follow His guidance. Nor would God punish them for their sins if they continued to seek forgiveness after committing them.

It is untrue that their punishment was postponed because they were the guardians of the Sacred Mosque. Indeed, they were not its true guardians, because its rightful guardians are those who are God-conscious: (8:33-35)

What delays their punishment is not their claim that they are the heirs of Abraham and the custodians of the Sacred Mosque. This is merely a claim that has no substance or foundation. They are not the owners or the guardians of this House of worship, i.e. the Kabah. Indeed, they are its enemies. God's Sacred Mosque, the Kabah, is not a place of property which one generation inherits from its predecessor. It is God's own house which is inherited by those who are God-

conscious. False also is their claim that they are the heirs of the Messenger Abraham. It is not through blood and lineage that Abraham's legacy is inherited. It is only inherited through faith and religion. Those who are God-conscious are the only ones to inherit Abraham and the House he built for God's sake. But those ungrateful were turning away from it, its true guardians who believed in Abraham's faith. Therefore, they could not be guardians of this Sacred Mosque, although they may offer their prayers there. Indeed, theirs is not a true prayer. It was no more than whistling and hand clapping. It involved much chaos that imparted no air of serenity or atmosphere of humility before God. It did not inspire any feeling of sacredness of that mosque.

Abd Allah ibn Umar says: They used to place their cheeks on the ground, whistling and clapping. This brings to mind the image of musicians who produce a great deal of noise, and who put their heads at the feet of those in high position in many countries which claim to be Muslim. This is no more than an aspect of *jahiliyyah* that is highlighted here. It is shown here after a clear picture of *jahiliyyah* has been raised, showing how people impose a sort of divine authority on earth, and claim sovereignty over people. When this type of *jahiliyyah* occurs, all other forms and styles of ignorance may follow.

*Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful.* (8:35) This refers to the suffering inflicted on them at the hands of the Muslim community. As for the suffering they prayed for, which involves extermination, it is simply postponed by God's mercy, as a gesture of honor to God's Messenger and his great position. It may be that they will eventually repent what they have been doing and pray to God to forgive them.

### SEPARATING THE GOOD FROM THE BAD

It is a common characteristic of ungrateful that they spend their money to cooperate in turning people away from God's path. God warns them that their purpose will be foiled and that they will come to find the loss of their money. He promises them defeat in this life and the punishment of hell in the life to come: *Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth so that they bar the way of God. They will spend it. Again, it will become a regret for them. Again, they will be vanquished. And those who were ungrateful will be assembled in hell.* (8:36)

## Signs: 9:128-9:129

*Certainly, there drew near to you a Messenger*
*from among yourselves.*
*It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.*
*He is anxious for you*
*and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate.* (9:128)
*But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me.*
*There is no god but He.*
*In Him I put my trust.*
*And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne.* (9:129)

## Commentary°

### The Prophet's Relationship with the Believers

These signs concludes with two signs which different reports suggest were revealed in Makkah. The first of these two signs explains the bond between God's Messenger and his people, and how compassionate and full of concern he was for them. This is perfectly fitting with the tasks assigned to the Muslim community who are required to support the Messenger, convey his message, fight his enemies and endure whatever trouble or hardship they may face in doing so. The final sign directs the Messenger to rely only on his Lord when people turn away from him. It is sufficient for him to have God's help and support. (9:128-129)

The statement here does not say 'a Messenger from among you' has come to you. Instead it describes the Messenger as being one 'from among yourselves' to add connotations of closer contact and firmer ties. It shows the type of bond that exists between them and their Messenger. He is one of them, with very close contact between them, and he feels for them. Another characteristic of this Messenger is that: *It was grievous to him that you fell into misfortune.* (9:128) He is keen that you should come to no hardship. He is also *He is anxious for you and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate.* (9:128) He would never lead you to ruin. If he calls on you to strive for God's cause, and to endure any difficulty in doing so, then you should know that he does not take this lightly, and that there is no cruelty in his heart. His call is a manifestation of compassion. He simply does not like to see you humiliated. He is too concerned that you should not suffer the ignominy of sin. He is keen that you should have the honor of conveying this message, earn God's pleasure and admittance into heaven. The signs then addresses the Prophet, showing him what attitude to take when people turn away from him and

his message. It points to the source of power which gives him all the protection he needs: *But if they turned away, say: God is enough for me. There is no god but He. In Him I put my trust. And He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne* (9:129) To Him belong all power, dominion, greatness and honor. His support is sufficient for everyone who seeks His patronage.

These signs which concentrate mainly on fighting and striving for God's cause is thus concluded with the directive to rely on God alone, trust Him and seek His powerful support. After all: *He is the Lord of the Sublime Throne.* (9:129)

## APPENDIX 3: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
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57 = 34
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60 = 40
61 = 41
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64 = 44
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67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

## NOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC THINKING BY HASHIM KAMALI

1. The rough equation that earlier Muslim scholars drew between the Islamic and Western conceptions of reason tended to be oblivious of the categories of reason and the Western critique of reason that divided it into "instrumental reason, critical reason, functional reason, abstract reason, imperialist reason, decentering reason" and the like. For details see Abdelwahab M. Elmessiri, "Features of the New Islamic Discourse," a Cairo conference paper, 1997: http:// www.21stcenturytrust.org/messiri.doc.

2. Some commentators have distinguished a total of 30 expressions that revolve around thinking over the *ayat*. See Abu Bakr al-Razi, *Tafsir al-Kabir* (Beirut: Dar al-Fikr, 1985), II, 222f.

3. Cf Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm fi'l-Quran al-Karim* (Cairo: Maktaba Wahba, 1416/1996), 36.

4. Al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Qur'an*, under "*Fikr*".

5. Cf., Karim Douglas Crow, "Islam and Reason" in *Al-Shajarah*, vol. 8, (2003),120-1.

6. Abbas Mahmud, "al-Agqad, Al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyyah" (Thinking is an Islamic Obligation) quoted in Jamal Badi and Mustapha Tajdin, *Creative Thinking: An Islamic Perspective*, 2nd edn. (Kuala Lumpur: International Islamic University Malaysia, 2005), 6.

7. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-'Ilm*, 41-45 quoting ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya's *Miftah Dar al-Sa'ada*, and 'Agqad's book entitled *al-Tafkir Faridah Islamiyya* (Beirut: al-Matba'a al-'Asriyya, 1992).

8. Cf. al-Qaradawi, *al-Aql wa'l-Ilm*, 200.

9. Cf .Ibid., 202.

10. Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat Alfaz al-Quran* (Beirut: Dar al-Shamiyya, 1383/1964), 249.

11. Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabataba'i, *al-Mizan fi-Tafsir al-Quran* (Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Alami, 1383/1964) II, 395.

12. Ala uddin al-Mattagi al-Hindi, *Kanz al-Ummah fi Sunan al-Aqwal wa'l-Af'al* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Risalah, 1383/1981), hadith no. 5873.

13. Abu Hamid Muhammad al-Ghazali, *Risalat al-Radd 'ala al-Laduniyya*, ed. 'Abd Allah Riyad Mustafa, (Damascus: Dar al-Hikma, 1986), 241.

14. CE Ahmad Fu'ad al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam* (Cairo: Dar al-Ma'arif bi-Misr, 1968), 227-228.

15. Cf. Aziz al-Azmeh, *Arabic Thought and Islamic Societies* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 109.

16. Cf. Diane F. Halpern, *Thought and Knowledge: An Introduction to Critical Thinking* (Mahwah: New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum and Associates, 1996), 21.

17. Cf. Ibrahim B. Syed, "Critical Thinking" as online at http://www.lrfi. org/articles/articles_101_150/critical_thinking.htm.

( 18. Muhammad Iqbal, *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* (Lahore: Shah Muhammad Ashraf, reprint 1982), 127.

19. Malik Bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin* (Cairo: Maktabah 'Amir, 1990), 34.

20. Iqbal, op. cit., 139.

21. See for details Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam is What's*

*Right with America* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2004), 4-5.

22. Georg W. H. Hegel, *Philosophy of History* (New York: Dove Books, 1956), 109.

23. Louay Safi, "The Creative Mission of the Muslim Minorities in the West: Synthesizing the Ethos of Islam and modernity," a conference paper presented at Westminster University, London, England February 21, 2004: http://insight.org/articles/Current/MuslimMinorities.htm.

24. Cf., M.H. Kamali, "Islam, Rationality and Science," in Islam and Science, vol. 1, no. 2 (2003), 126f, see also Mehdi Golshani, "Philosophy of Science from the Qur'anic Perspective," in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 73f.

25. Cf. Ishfaq Ahmad, "Research and Development Culture in the Islamic World: Past and Present Problems and Future Directions," in Abu Bakr Abdul Majeed et al. (eds.) *New Knowledge, Research and Development in the Muslim World* (Kuala Lumpur: Institute of Islamic Understanding Malaysia, 2004), 14-15.

26. See for a discussion Oliver Leaman, "Institutionalising Research and Development Culture in the Islamic and Non-Islamic World: A Comparative Perspective," in Abu Bakr Majeed, (ed.) *New Knowledge*, 50-51.

27. Malik bin Nabi, *Intaj al-Mustashriqin*, 26.

28. See for details Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies* 41 (2002), 623 ff.

29. There is a chapter on *ijtihad* in M. H. Kamali, *Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence* (Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society, 1991, 3rd edn. 2003). See also my article "Issues in the Understanding of Jihad and Ijtihad" in *Islamic Studies*, 41 (2002), 617-635; and "Issues in the Legal Theory and Usul and Prospects for Reform" in *Islamic Studies*, 40 (2001), 1-21.

30. Sergio Moravia. *The Enigma of the Mind: The Mind-Body Problem in Contemporary Thought*, tr. S. Staton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. First published in Rome, 1986), 4-5.

31. See for example, Howard Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed: Multiple Intelligence for the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

32. See for details Roger Garudy, "The Balance Sheet of Western Philosophy in this Century" in *Towards Islamisation of Disciplines* (Herndon: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1989), 399f.

33. Mehdi Golshani, "From Knowledge to Wisdom: A Qur'anic Perspective," in *Islamic Studies*, 44 (2005), 13.

34. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyat*, 68.

35. Cf., Al-Ahwani, *al-Tarbiyah fi'l-Islam*, 189.

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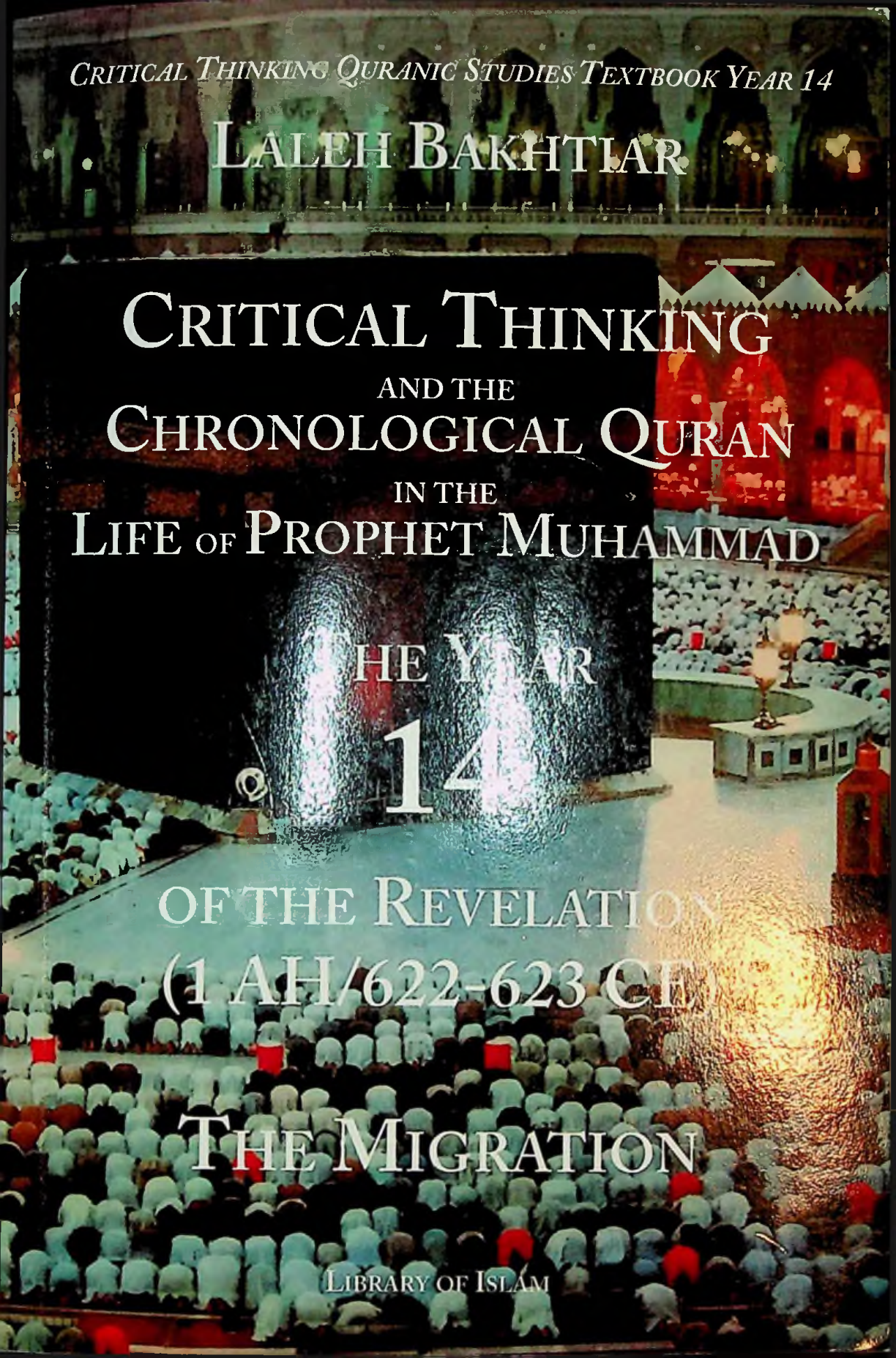
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# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 14

## of the Revelation (1 AH/622-623 CE)

## The Migration

Laleh Bakhtiar

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## ca. July 16, 622 CE-July 4, 623 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 14*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 1 AH/ca. July 16, 622 CE-July 4, 623 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

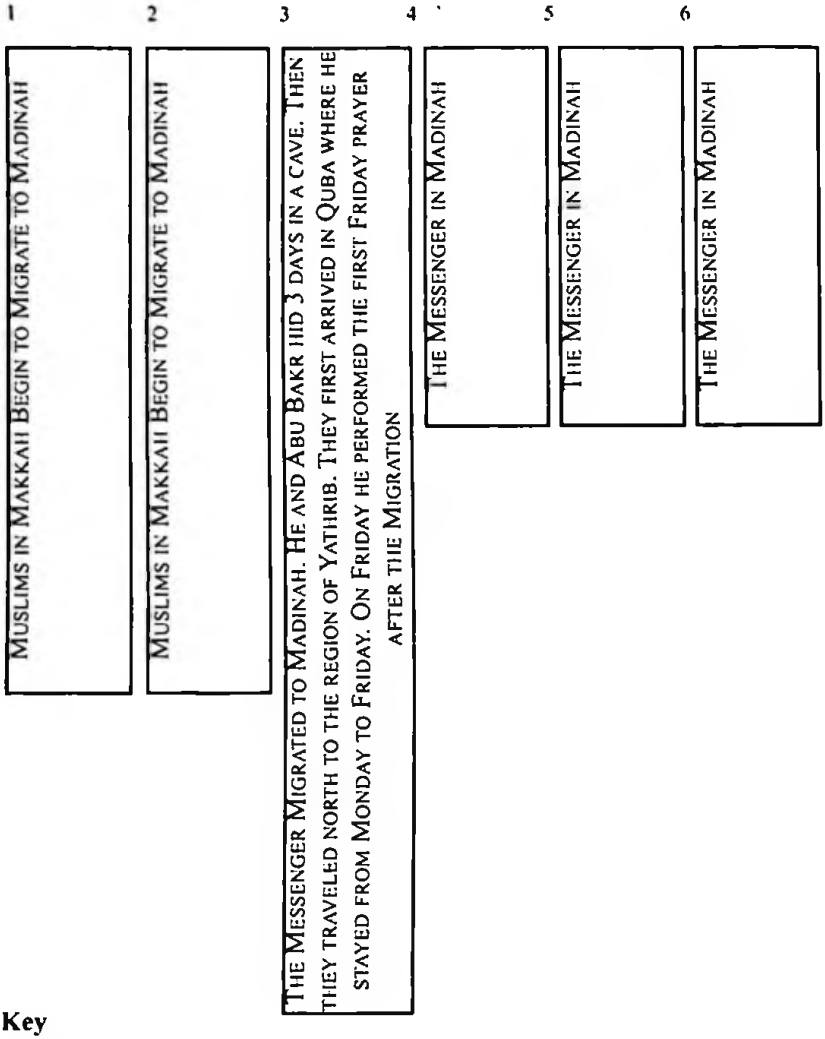
My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 14*

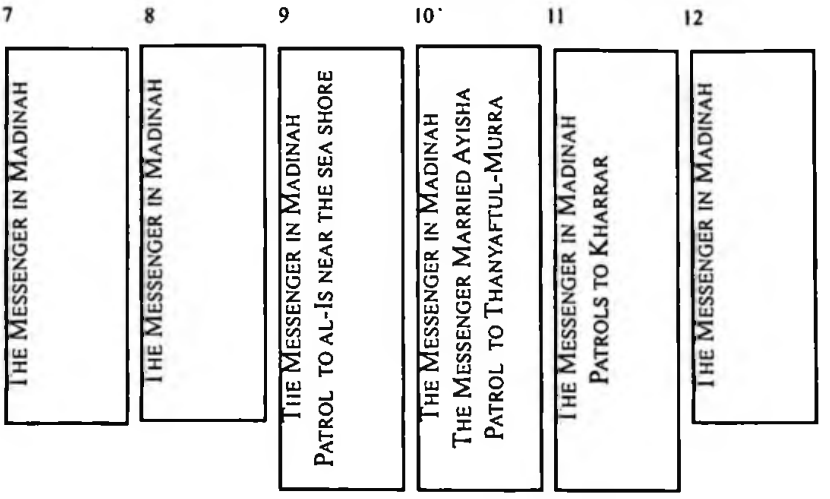



**Key**

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# Preview *Book Year 14*




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 14* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. All of the Lessons in *Book Year 14* explore the revelation of Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) which is the 87th Chapter revealed beginning with an Introduction below to the first chapter revealed in Madinah.

We are beginning to reach Arabic dates that have been recorded for important events in the life of the Prophet. The listing of the dates according to the Gregorian calendar are complicated and approximate only. That is why they are preceded by ca. For those who wish to know more about this topic, here is an excellent article by M. Hamidullah written in 1969 in the *Islamic Review and Arab Affairs*. Scroll down to the article.
http://www.aaiil.org/text/articles/islamicreview/1969/02feb/islamicreview_196902.pdf

The chronological order of the chapters of the Quran that follow throughout the series is based on the list accepted by al-Azhar University in Cairo[1] and is considered to be the official order. It differs greatly from the chronological order developed by Western scholars over the centuries and is much more detailed.

Quranic signs or (*ayat*) of each section (*ruku*) in a particular Quranic chapter are given in each lesson followed by a commentary and a Student Assessment consisting of an Example of the Eight Elements of Reasoning and questions or assignments in Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills.

We do not have a great deal of detailed information about the life of the Prophet Muhammad during the Makkah period. The information that we have falls in the various lessons, the Prelude, an Interlude or the Epilogue. Appendix 1 correlates the original Quranic chapters with their chronological order.

# PRELUDE

## MUSLIMS BEGIN TO MIGRATE TO MADINAH

The Prophet remained in Makkah the rest of Dhu al-Hajja 1 BH/ 621 CE, and Muharram and Safar H/621 CE. While some Muslims had already migrated to Madinah after the First Pledge of Aqaba, the majority were still in Makkah. After the Second Pledge of Aqaba, the Prophet told the Muslims to begin migrating to Madinah in small groups.

That is, two or three weeks after the Pledge of the Aqaba, the beginning of Muharram, the migration of the believers from Makkah to Madinah began. Madinah lies some 180 miles north of Makkah, and the journey is accomplished by the pilgrim caravans in eleven days, or if pressed for time, in ten.[1]

Within two months nearly all the followers of the Prophet, except the few detained in confinement or unable to escape from bondage, had migrated with their families to their new abode. They numbered between one and two hundred people.[2]

They were welcomed with cordial and even eager hospitality by their Muslim brothers at Madinah, who competed with one another for the honor of receiving them into their homes, and supplying their domestic needs.

> The first of the Quraysh to migrate to Madinah from among the Messenger's Companions was one of the Makhzum clan, Abu Salama ibn Abd al-Asad ibn Hilal ibn Abd Allah ibn Umar ibn Makhzum whose forename was Abd Allah. He went to Madinah a year before the pledge at al-Aqaba, having come to the Messenger in Makkah from Abyssinia. He migrated because the Quraysh ill-treated him and he had heard that some of the Helpers had accepted the Quranic message.
>
> My father, Ishaq ibn Yasar, on the authority of Salama, who had it from his grandmother, Umm Salama, the Prophet's wife, told me that she said: When Abu Salama had decided to set out for Madinah, he saddled his camel for me and mounted me on it together with my son, Salama, who was in my arms. Then he set out leading the camel. When men from the al-Mughayrah clan got up and said to Abu Salama: So far as you are concerned, you can do what you like, but what about your wife and child? Do you suppose that we shall let you take them away?
>
> So they snatched the camel's rope from his hand and took me from him. Abu Salama's family, the Abd al-Asad clan, were angry at this and said: We will not leave our son with her seeing you have torn her from our tribesman.
>
> So they pulled at my little boy, Salama between them until they dislocated his arm, and the al-Asad took him away, while the al-

Mughayrah kept me with them. My husband, Abu Salama, went to Madinah. Thus I was separated from my husband and my son.

I used to go out every morning and sit in the valley weeping continuously until a year or so had passed when one of my cousins of al-Mughayrah passed and saw my plight and took pity on me. He said to his tribesmen: Why don't you let this poor woman go? You have separated husband, wife, and child.

So they said to me: You can join your husband if you like.

Then the Abd al-Asad restored my son to me. So I saddled my camel and took my son and carried him in my arms. Then I set forth for my husband in Madinah. Not a soul was with me. I thought that I could get food from anyone I met on the road until I reached my husband.

When I was in Tanimi, I met Uthman ibn Talha ibn Abu Talha, brother of the Abd al-Dar clan, who asked me where I was going and if I was all alone.

I told him that except for God and my little boy I was alone.

He said that I ought not to be left helpless like that and he took hold of the camel's halter and went along with me. Never have I met an Arab more noble than he. When we halted he would make the camel kneel for me and then withdraw. When we reached a stopping-place, he would lead my camel away, unload it, and tie it to a tree. Then he would go away from me and lie down under a tree.

When evening came, he would bring the camel and saddle it, then go behind me and tell me to ride. When I was firmly established in the saddle, he would come and take the halter and lead it until he brought me to a halt. This he did all the way to Madinah.

When he saw a village of Amr Auf clan in Quba he said: Your husband is in this village, so enter it with the blessing of God.

Then he went off on his way back to Makkah.

She used to say: By God, I do not know a family in the Quranic message which suffered what the family of Abu Salama did. Nor have I ever seen a nobler man than Uthman ibn Talha.[3]

### Abu Bakr Making Preparations to Migrate to Madinah

Abu Bakr had been making preparations for the journey. In anticipation of the emergency, he had already purchased for 800 pieces two swift camels, which were now tied up and highly fed in the yard of his house. A guide, accustomed to the devious tracks and byways of the Madinah route, was hired, and the camels were committed to his custody.[1]

At last the Messenger and Abu Bakr with their families, including Ali, now a youth of about twenty years of age, were the only believers left (excepting those unwillingly detained) at Makkah. Abu Bakr was ambitious of

being the companion of the Messenger in his flight and daily urged him to depart. But the Messenger told him that his time was not yet come: the Lord had not as yet given him the command to emigrate. Perhaps he was deferring his departure until he could receive assurance from Madinah that the arrangements for his reception were secure, and that his adherents there were not only ready, but able in the face of any opposition, to execute their engagement for his defense.[2]

### THE UNGRATEFUL QURAYSH MEET TO KILL THE PROPHET

What was the decision as to their future course of action, what the object even of the present deputation, it is impossible to conclude. There is little reason to believe that it was assassination, although we are told that such was determined upon at the instigation of Abu Jahl, supported by Satan, who, in the person of an old man from Najd shrouded in a mantle, joined the council.

The following is the narrative the Quraysh, irritated at the warm reception of the converts at Madinah, held a council. Satan, in the shape of an old man shrouded in a cloak, stood at the door saying that he was a Shaykh from Najd, who had heard of their weighty consultation, and had come if haply he might help them to a right decision; so they invited him to enter. One proposed to imprison, another to expel, Muhammad. The old man from Najd warmly opposed both suggestions.

Then said Abu Jahl: Let us choose one courageous man from every family of the Quraysh, and place in the hands of each a sharp sword, then let the whole slay him with the stroke of one man so his blood will be divided amongst all our families, and the relatives of the Messenger will not know how to avenge it. The old man of Najd applauded the scheme, saying: May God reward this man this is the right advice and none other.

So they separated, having agreed upon it. Gabriel forthwith apprised the Messenger of the design, who arose and made Ali lie down upon his bed.

The murderous party came at dusk, and lay in wait about the house. the Messenger went forth, and casting a handful of dust at them, recited: *Ya Sin. By the Wise Quran, truly, you are among the ones who are sent on a straight path, sent down successively by The Almighty, The Compassionate that you warn a folk whose fathers were not warned, so they were ones who were heedless. Certainly, the saying was realized against most of them for they believe not. We laid yokes on their necks up to the chins, so that they are ones who are stiff-necked. And We laid in advance of them an embankment and behind them an embankment. Then, We covered them so they perceive not.*

Thus he departed without their knowing what passed and they continued to watch, some say until morning, thinking that the figure on the bed was Muhammad. As light dawned, they found out their mistake and saw that it was Ali. Others say they watched until some one passed and told them that the Messenger had left, when they arose in confusion and shook from their

heads the dust which the Messenger had cast upon them.[3]

On the first night of Rabi I 622 CE, in the 13th year of the revelation, the Quraysh surrounded the Messengers house. Their plan is that when he falls asleep, they will attack him and kill him.

And it was revealed to the Messenger sometime in Makkah:

*And mention when those who were ungrateful plan against **you** to bring **you** to a standstill or to kill **you** or to drive **you** out. And they plan and God plans, but God is Best of the ones who plan. And when Our signs are recounted to them, they said: We heard this. If we will, we would say the like of this. Truly, this is only fables of ancient ones. And when they said: O God! Truly, if this had been The Truth from **You**, rain down rocks on us from heaven or bring us a painful punishment. But God had not been punishing them with **you** among them. Nor had God been One Who Punishes them while they ask for forgiveness. And what is with them that God should not punish them while they bar worshipers from the Masjid al-Haram and they had not been its protectors? Truly, its protectors are but ones who are God-conscious except most of them know not. Their formal prayer at the House had been nothing but whistling and clapping of hands. So experience the punishment because you had been ungrateful. Truly, those who were ungrateful spend their wealth so that they bar the way of God. They will spend it. Again, it will become a regret for them. Again, they will be vanquished. And those who were ungrateful will be assembled in hell.* (8:30-8:36)

Gabriel came to the Messenger and said: Do not sleep tonight on the bed on which you usually sleep. Having been forewarned, the Messenger told Ali ibn Abu Talib to sleep in his bed and cover himself with the Messengers cloak so that the enemies would not recognize who was there.

Then the time came when the darkness of the night covered everything and Ali ibn Abu Talib was sleeping on the Prophet's bed calmly and peacefully, the ungrateful Quraysh besieged the house and prepared their swords and spears to attack. As soon as the order came, they broke through the house rushing with naked swords. But when they found Ali ibn Abu Talib laying on the bed of the Prophet, they immediately moved out of the house desperate and astonished, and sent a few horsemen to search the Prophet.

### The Quraysh Paralyzed by the Sudden Movement

The Quraysh were paralyzed by a movement so carefully planned, and

put into such speedy execution. They looked on in amazement, as families silently disappeared, and house after house was abandoned. One or two quarters of the city were entirely deserted, and the doors of the dwelling-houses left locked.[4]

There was here a determination and self-sacrifice on which the ungrateful Quraysh had hardly calculated. But even if they had foreseen and resolved to oppose the emigration, it would have been difficult to prevent it. The number of independent clans and powerful families stood in the way of combined action. Here and there a slave or helpless dependent might be intimidated or held back, but in no other case was there the right to interfere with private choice or family counsel and the least show of violence might have roused a host of champions to avenge the insulted honor of their tribe.

### PREPARATION FOR THE JOURNEY

Asma prepared food for the journey, and in the dusk brought it in a package to the cave. In the hurry of the moment, she had forgotten the thong for fastening it. So, tearing her girdle in two, with one strip she closed it and with the other bound it to the camel's saddle. From this incident Asma is honorably known in Islam as "she of the girdle". Abu Bakr, not forgetful of his money, had safely secreted among his other property a purse of between five and six thousand pieces.

### THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR LEAVE FOR MADINAH

The camels were now ready. the Messenger mounted the swifter of the two, Qaswa, thenceforward his favorite, with the guide. Abu Bakr having taken his servant, Ibn Fuhayra, behind him on the other, they started.

### THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR ESCAPE TO THE CAVE THAUR

Pursuing their way south and clambering in the dark up the bare and rugged ascent, they reached at last the lofty peak of mount Thaur, distant about an hour and a half from the city, and took refuge in a cave near its summit.[5]

### THE CAVE

Al-Waqidi says that after the Messenger and Abu Bakr entered, a spider came and wove her web over the mouth of the cave. The Quraysh hotly searched after the Messenger in all directions, until they came up to the entrance. When they looked, they said: Spiders' webs are over it and so they turned back.

Again: God commanded a tree and a spider to cover the Prophet, and two wild pigeons to perch at the entrance of the cave. When a company of two men from each clan of the Quraysh, armed with swords, pursuing the Prophet, were now close to him, the foremost saw the pigeons, and returned to his companions, saying that he was sure from this that nobody was in the cave. The

Prophet, hearing his words, blessed the pigeons, and made them sacred ever after in the sacred area, where it is sacrilege to harm them.

### FOOD AND INTELLIGENCE CONVEYED TO THEM

Amir ibn Fuqhayra, while in company with other shepherds of Makkah tending his master Abu Bakr's flock, stole away unobserved every evening with a few goats to the cave and furnished its inmates with a plentiful supply of milk. Abd Allah, Abu Bakr's son, in the same manner at night brought them food cooked by his sister, Asma. It was his business also to watch by day the progress of events and opinion at Makkah, and to report the result at night.

### SEARCH AFTER THE MESSENGER

The city was in a ferment when the disappearance of the Messenger was first told. The chief men of the Quraysh went to his house and finding Ali there, asked where his cousin was. I have no knowledge of him, replied Ali, am I his keeper? You bade him go, and he has gone.

Then they went to Abu Bakr's house and questioned his daughter Asma. Asma relates that, after the Messenger had gone, a company of Quraysh, with Abu Jahl, came to her house. As they stood at the door, she went forth to them. Where is thy father? said they. Truly I know not where he is, she replied. Upon which Abu Jahl, who was a bad and impudent man, slapped her on the face with such force that one of her ear-rings dropped.[6]

Failing to elicit from her any information, they sent scouts in all directions, with the view of gaining a clue to the track and destination of the Prophet, if not with less innocent instructions. But the precautions of the Messenger and Abu Bakr rendered it a fruitless search. One by one the emissaries returned with no trace of the fugitives; and at last it was believed that, having gained a fair start, they had outstripped pursue it. The people soon reconciled themselves to the idea. They even breathed more freely now that their troubler was gone. The city again was still.

### THE MESSENGER AND ABU BAKR DECIDE TO LEAVE THE CAVE

On the third night, the report of Abd Allah satisfied the refugees that search had ceased, and busy curiosity relaxed. The opportunity was come. They could slip away unobserved now, and the sooner the better. Longer delay might excite suspicion, and the visits of Abd Allah and Ibn Fuyhayra attract attention to the cave. The roads were clear. They might leave at once fearless of pursuit, and travel without apprehension of arrow or dagger from the wayside enemy. Abd Allah, therefore, received commission to have all things ready for the following evening. The guide was instructed to wander about with the two camels near the summit of mount Thaur.

Descending mount Thaur, and leaving the lower quarter of Makkah a little to the right, they struck off by a track considerably to the left of the common

road and, hurrying westward, soon gained the vicinity of the seashore nearly opposite Usfan.

By daybreak they reached a Bedouin encampment, where an Arab widow sat at her tent-door with food spread out for any chance traveler that might pass that way. Fatigued and thirsty, for it was now the hottest season of the year, they refreshed themselves with the food and milk offered by the lady. During the heat of the day, they rested at Qudayd. In the evening, being now as they deemed at a safe enough distance, they fell into the common road. But they had not gone far when they met one of the mounted scouts returning from his search. Suraa (for that was his name), seeing that he had small chance single-handed of success against his four opponents, offered no opposition. but on the contrary pledged his word that, if permitted to depart in peace, he would not reveal that he had met them. The party proceeded. the Messenger was safe.[7]

### TIDINGS REACH MAKKAH OF THEIR FLIGHT

The first tidings that reached Makkah of the course actually taken by the Messenger were brought, two or three days after his flight, by a traveler from the Bedouin camp at which he had rested. It was now certain, from his passing there, that he was bound for Madinah.

### ALI LEAVES FOR MADINAH

Ali remained three days at Makkah after the departure of Muhammad, appearing every day in public for the purpose of restoring the property placed by various persons in the Prophet's trust. He met with no opposition or annoyance, and then leisurely took his departure for Madinah. The families of the Messenger and of Abu Bakr were equally unmolested. Zaynab continued for a time to dwell at Makkah with her unconverted husband. Ruqiyya had already gone with Uthman to Madinah. The Messenger's other two daughters, Umm Kulthum and Fatima, with his wife Sawda, were for some weeks left behind at Makkah. Umm Kulthum had been married to one of the sons of Abu Lahab, but was now living in her father's house. Ayisha, his betrothed, yet a child, with the rest of Abu Bakr's family and several other women, likewise, remained in Makkah for a time.

The Messenger and Abu Bakr trusted their respective clans to protect their families from insult. But no insult or annoyance was offered by the Quraysh, nor was any attempt made to detain them. Thus ends the first great stage of the Prophet's life. The next scene opens at Madinah.

### THE EFFECT PRODUCED ON CONVERTS BY THE MESSENGER

Thirteen years before the Hijra, Makkah lay lifeless in this debased state. What a change had those thirteen years now produced! A band of several hundred persons had rejected idolatry, adopted the worship of One God, and sur-

rendered themselves implicitly to the guidance of what they believed a revelation from Him praying to the Almighty with frequency and fervor, looking for pardon through His mercy, and striving to follow after good works, almsgiving, purity, and justice. They now lived under a constant sense of the omnipotent power of God, and of His providential care over the minutest of their concerns. In all the gifts of nature, in every relation of life, at each turn of their affairs, individual or public, they saw His hand. And, above all, the new existence in which they exulted was regarded as the mark of His special grace while the unbelief of their blinded fellow-citizens was the hardening stamp of reprobation. The Messenger was the minister of life to them, the source under God of their new-born hopes and to him they yielded an implicit submission.

In so short a period Makkah had, from this wonderful movement, been torn into two factions which, unmindful of the old land marks of tribe and family, arrayed themselves in deadly opposition one against the other. The believers bore persecution with a patient and tolerant spirit. And though it was their wisdom so to do, the credit of a magnanimous forbearance may be freely accorded.

One hundred men and women, rather than abjure their precious faith, had abandoned home and sought refuge, till the storm should be overpast, in Abyssinian exile. And now again a still larger number, with the Messenger himself, were emigrating from their fondly loved city with its sacred Kabah, to them the holiest spot on earth, and fleeing to Madinah. There, the same marvelous charm had within two or three years been preparing for them a brotherhood ready to defend the Messenger and his followers with their blood. Jewish truth had long sounded in the ears of the men of Madinah, but it was not until they heard the spirit-stirring strains of the Arabian Prophet that they too awoke from their slumber, and sprang suddenly into a new and earnest life.

### THE TRAVEL TO QUBA

They had by this time joined the common road to Syria which runs near the snore of the Red Sea. On the morning of the third day, a small caravan was observed in the distance. The apprehensions of the fugitives were soon allayed, for Abu Bakr recognized at the head of the caravan his cousin, Talha, who was returning from a mercantile trip to Syria. Warm was the greeting, and loud the congratulations. Talha opened his stores, and, producing two changes of fine white Syrian raiment, bestowed them on his kinsman and the Prophet. The present was welcome to the soiled and weary travelers; yet more welcome was the assurance that Talha had left the Muslims at Madinah in eager expectation of their Prophet. So the Messenger and Abu Bakr proceeded on their journey with lighter hearts and quickened pace; while the merchant continued his way to Makkah. There Talha disposed of his venture; and, so

little were the Makkans even now disposed to molest the believers, that after quietly adjusting his affairs, he set out unopposed some little time afterwards for Madinah, with the families of the Messenger and Abu Bakr.[8]

After proceeding some way farther on the caravan Madinah route, the Messenger and his companions struck off to the right, by a way called the road of Madlaj.[9] The valleys which they crossed, the defiles they ascended, the spots on which the Messenger performed his devotions, have all been preserved in tradition by the pious zeal of his followers.

At Arj, within two days journey of Madinah, one of the camels, worn out by the rapid traveling, became unable to proceed. A chief of the Aslam tribe residing there supplied a fresh camel in its stead, and also furnished a guide.

At length, on the morning of Monday, eight days after leaving Makkah, the little party reached al-Aqiq, a valley which traverses the mountains four or five miles to the southwest of Madinah.[10]

The heat was intense; for the summer sun, now approaching the meridian, beat fiercely on the bare ridges and stony defiles, the desolation of which was hardly relieved by an occasional clump of the wild acacia.[11]

Climbing the opposite ascent, they reached the crest of the mountain. Here a scene opened on them which contrasted strangely with the frowning peaks and the dark naked rocks, in the midst of which for hours they had been toiling. It was Madinah, surrounded by verdant gardens and groves of the graceful palm. What thoughts crowded on the mind of the Messenger and his faithful friend as they gazed on the prospect below them!

Widespread is the view from the heights on which they stood, and well fitted to stir the heart of any traveler. The vast plain of Najd stretches away towards the south as far as the eye can reach, while on the eastern horizon it is bounded by a low line of dark hills. To the north the prospect is arrested, at the distance of three or four miles, by the granite masses of Uhud, a spur of the great central chain. A well-defined watercourse, flowing from the south-east under the nearest side of the city, is lost among the north-eastern hills, the cliffs of which touch the city on this quarter.

To the right, Jabal Ayr, a ridge nearly corresponding in distance and height with Uhud, projects into the plain and bounds it on the south-west. Closely pressing on the southern suburb, and in bright contrast to the wild rocks and rugged peaks around and behind our travelers, are the orchards of palm-trees for which Madinah has in all ages been famous.

One sheet of gardens extends uninterruptedly to Quba, a suburb to the south, the loveliest and most verdant spot in all the plains.[12] Around the city in every direction, date-trees and green fields meet the eye, interspersed here and there with the substantial houses and fortified hamlets of the Jewish tribes, and the suburban residences of the Aws and Khazraj.

The tender reminiscence of childhood, when he visited this place in company with his mother, was perhaps the first thought to cross the mind of the

Prophet. But more pressing considerations were at hand. How would he be received? Were his adherents powerful enough to secure for him a unanimous welcome? Or would either of the contending factions, which had often stained with blood that peaceful plain, be roused against him? Before putting the friendship of the city to actual test, it would be prudent to retire to one of the suburbs, and Quba lay invitingly before them.

The Messenger said to the guide: Lead us to the Bani Amr ibn Awf at Quba, and do not go directly Madinah.[13] So leaving the Madinah path to the left, they descended into the plain and made for Quba.

For several days the city had been in expectation of its illustrious visitor. Tidings had been received for the coming of the Prophet's disappearance from Makkah; but no one knew of his three days withdrawal to the cave. He ought before now to have arrived, even supposing delay in consequence of a devious route.

Every morning a large company of the converts of Madinah, and the refugees from Makkah, had for some days gone forth a mile or two on the Makkan road, and posted themselves on the first rocky ridge to the west of the city. There they watched till the fierce rays of the ascending sun drove them from the unsheltered spot to their homes.

On this day they had gone out as usual, and, after a fruitless watch, had retired to the city, when a Jew, catching a glimpse of the three travelers winding their way to Quba, shouted from the top of his house: Ho! Ya Qayla tribes! (Qayla means the Aws and Khazraj. Qayla was the mother of the two patriarchs of those branches.) He has come! He whom you have been looking for has come at last!

Every one now hurried forth to Quba. A shout of joy arose from the Amr ibn Aws[14] when they found that the Messenger had come amongst them. The wearied travelers, amidst the greeting of old friends and the smiles of strange faces, alighted and sat down under the shadow of a tree.[15]

The journey had been accomplished in eight days. The ordinary time is eleven.[16] The joyful news was speedily spread over the city. The children in the streets cried out in delight: Here is the Prophet! He is come! He is come!

The converts from all quarters flocked to see him. He received them courteously, and said: O People! show your joy by giving to your neighbors the salutation of peace: send portions to the poor: bind closely the ties of relationship: offer up formal prayer whilst others sleep. Thus shall you enter Paradise in peace.[17]

It was shortly arranged that the Messenger should for the present lodge at Quba with Kulthum, an hospitable chief, who had already received many of the emigrants on their first arrival in Madinah, A great part of every day was also spent in the house of Saad, the son of Khaythama, one of the Awsite leaders. There the Messenger received such persons as wished to see him, and conferred with his friends on the state of feeling in Madinah.[18]

Abu Bakr was entertained by another Awsite chief, Kharija ibn Zayd, in the adjoining suburb, al-Sunh. He showed his gratitude by marrying the daughter of Kharija, and permanently took up his residence with the family.[19]

A day or two after the Prophet's arrival, Ali, who, as we have seen, remained only three days at Makkah subsequently to the disappearance of Muhammad, and must therefore have set out shortly after him, reached Madinah, and was accommodated by Kulthum in the same house with the Prophet.

### THE FIRST FRIDAY PRAYER

It was soon determined in the council of the Messenger that he might with safety enter Madinah. The welcome he had received was warm, and to all appearance unanimous and sincere. The elements of disaffection might be slumbering among the yet unconverted citizens, Jews, and idolaters; but they were unnoticed amid the universal expression of joy and the first impulse of generous hospitality. The Messenger, therefore, stopped only four days at Quba, from Monday to Friday.[20]

During this period, he laid the foundations of a mosque at Quba, which at a later period was honored in the Quran with the name of: The Mosque of God-consciousness of God: *Is one who founds his structure on the God'consciousness o f God and His contentment better than he who founds his structure on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell? And God guides not the fold, the ones who are unjust!* (9:109)

The Messenger enlarged it after the *qibla* was changed and advanced its foundations and walls. He himself with his followers aided in carrying the materials. He used to visit it every Saturday and attached to the saying of prayers therein the merit of the lesser pilgrimage (*umra*).[21]

On the morning of Friday, the Messenger mounted his favorite camel, al-Qaswa, taking Abu Bakr behind him[22] and, surrounded by a crowd of followers, proceeded towards Yathrib (Madinah). He halted at a place of formal prayer in the valley of the Salim, a Khazraj clan; and there performed his first Friday service with about a hundred Muslims.[23]

On this occasion, he added a sermon and eulogy on the new faith:

> Praise be to God. I praise Him and call on Him for help, forgiveness and guidance. I believe in Him, do not deny Him and am an enemy of whoever denies Him. I bear witness that there is no god but God alone, without partner, and that the Messenger is His servant and his Messenger, whom he has sent with guidance, light and exhortation, after an interval in the appearance of Messengers at a time when knowledge is scarce, men are led astray, time is cut short, the Last Hour is at hand and the End is close.
>
> Whoever obeys God and His Prophet has been rightly guided;

whoever disobeys them has erred, been remiss and gone far astray. I recommend to you God-consciousness for the best thing which a Muslim can enjoin upon a Muslim is that he should exhort him to seek the Other World and command him to fear God.

Beware of what God has warned you against concerning Himself. There is no better advice than this and no better admonition. God-consciousness, for whoever acts according to it conscious of his Lord, is a trusty aid to what you desire of the Other World. He who sets aright what is between him and his Lord in secret and in public, seeking nothing thereby but the face of God, will be remembered in this world and will have a treasure in that which is after death. Then a person will have need of that good that he has done previously; and as for that which is otherwise, he will wish that there was a great distance between him and it. God warns you to beware of Himself, but God is merciful to His servants and to those who believe His word and fulfill their promises.

God says: *The saying near Me is not to be substituted and I am not unjust to the servants.* Be conscious of God, then in this world and the next, in secret and in public. He who is God-conscious will have his evil deeds forgiven and his reward magnified; he will achieve a great success. The God-consciousness will ward off God's hatred and retribution and wrath. It will make people blameless in the sight of God, will please the Lord and will raise their degree.

Seize hold of your portion and do not be remiss with regard to God. God has caused you to know His Book and has opened His path before you in order that He may know those who speak the truth and those who lie. Act well, then, as God has acted well with you. Be enemies of his enemies, and strive on God's behalf in the way to which He is entitled. He has chosen you and named you Muslims.

There is no power but with God. Remember God frequently and act for the sake of that which is after today, for he who sets aright that which is between him and God will have that which is between him and other people taken care of by God. That is because God pronounces judgment upon people whereas they do not pronounce judgment upon Him and because God rules people whereas they do not rule Him. God is the Greater. There is no might but with God the Greater.[24]

Friday was thereafter set apart for the weekly celebration of public worship. When the service was finished, the Messenger resumed his advance towards Madinah. He had sent a message to the Najjar, his relatives, through Salma, the mother of Abd al-Muttalib, to escort him into the city. But there was no need of special invitation. The tribes and families of Madinah came

streaming forth, and vied one with another in showing honor to their visitor.

### ARRIVAL IN YATHRIB (MADINAH)

It was a triumphal procession. Around the camels of the Messenger and his immediate followers, rode the chief men of the city, clad in their best raiment and in glittering armor. The cavalcade pursued its way through the gardens and palm groves of the southern suburbs; and as it now threaded the streets of the city, the heart of the Messenger was gladdened by the incessant call from one and another of the citizens who flocked around: Stay here, O Prophet! We have abundance with us; and we have the means of defense, and weapons, and room. Abide with us.

So urgent was the appeal that sometimes they seized hold of al-Qaswa's halter. The Prophet answered them all courteously and kindly. He said: The decision rests with the camel; make way, therefore, for her; let her go free.

It was a stroke of policy. His residence would be hallowed in the eyes of the people as selected supernaturally; while any heart-burnings of the jealous tribes, which otherwise might arise from the quarter of one being preferred before the quarter of another, would thus receive a decisive check.[25]

Onwards moved al-Qaswa, with slackened rein and, leaving the larger portion of the city to the left, entered the eastern quarter, inhabited by the Najjar. There, finding a large and open courtyard, with a few date-trees, she halted and sat down. The Prophet, having left the rein quite loose, al-Qaswa got up again, and went a little way forward, when she perceived her error, returned straightway to the self same spot, knelt down, and placing her head and neck on the ground, refused to stir.[26]

The house of Abu Ayub was close at hand. The Prophet and Abu Bakr, alighting, inquired who was the owner of it. Abu Ayub stepped forward and invited them to enter. The Prophet became his guest, and occupied the lower story of his house for seven months, until the middle of Shawwal when the mosque and his own apartments were ready. Abu Ayub offered to give up the higher story of his house in which his family lived; but the Messenger preferred the lower, as being more accessible for his visitors.[27]

When the Messenger had alighted, Abu Ayub lost no time in carrying into his house the saddle and other property of the travelers; while Asad ibn Zurara, a neighbor, seized al-Qaswa's halter and conducted her to his courtyard where he kept her for the Prophet. Dishes of choice food, bread and meat, butter and milk, presently arrived from various houses; and this hospitality was kept up daily so long as the Messenger resided with Abu Ayub.[28]

The first concern of the Messenger was to secure the plot of land in which al-Qaswa halted. It was a neglected spot: on one side was a scanty grove of date-trees; the other, covered here and there with thorny shrubs, had been used partly as a burial ground and partly as a yard for tying camels up. It belonged to two orphan boys under the guardianship of Asad, who had constructed a

place of worship there before the arrival of Muhammad, and had already held service within its roofless walls. The Prophet called the two lads before him, and desired to purchase this piece of ground from them that he might build a mosque upon it.

They replied: Nay, but we will make a free gift of it to you.

The Prophet would not accept the donation.

So the price was fixed at ten dinars, which Abu Bakr, at the command of the Prophet, paid over to the orphans.[29]

Arrangements for the construction of a great mosque, with two houses adjoining—one for his wife, Sawda, the other for his intended bride, Ayisha were forthwith set on foot. The date-trees and thorny bushes were cut down. The graves were dug up and the bones elsewhere deposited. The uneven ground was carefully leveled and the rubbish cleared away. A spring, oozing out in the vicinity, rendered the site damp; it was blocked up, and at length disappeared. Bricks were prepared, and materials collected.[30]

### THE MESSENGER'S FAMILY ARRIVES IN MADINAH

Having taken up his residence in Abu Ayub's house, the Messenger turned his attention to his family. He despatched his freedman, Zayd, with a slave named Abu Rafi[31] on two camels, with a purse of 500 dirham, to fetch them from Makkah. They met there with no difficulty or opposition, and returned with Sawda, the Prophet's wife, and his two daughters, Umm Kulthum and Fatima, the former of whom had been married into the family of Abu Lahab, but, being separated, had for some time been living in her father's house. Zaynab, the eldest daughter, remained at Makkah with her husband, Abu 'l-Aas. Ruqayya, the second, had already emigrated to Madinah with her husband, Uthman. Zayd brought with him his own wife, Umm Ayman (Baraka) and their son Usama. Usama was probably 8 or 10 years old.

Accompanying the party were Ayisha and her mother, Umm Ruman, with other members of the family of Abu Bakr. They were conducted by Abu Bakr's son Abd Allah and (as we have seen above) by Talha. Talha (at what period I do not know) married Umm Kulthum, daughter of Abu Bakr, with whom he always seems to have been on terms of close intimacy.[32]

### MARRIAGE TO AYISHA

The family of Abu Bakr, including Ayesha, was accommodated in a neighboring house, that of Harith ibn Numan. The marriage of Ayisha, however, took place in her father's new home at al-Sunh. Sawda probably lived with the Messenger in the house of Abu Ayub. We know little about her, save that, having emigrated with her former husband to Abyssinia, she was more than ordinarily devoted to the cause of Islam. From the time of their marriage shortly after the death of Khadija, she continued to be for three or four years the only wife of Muhammad.

## EMIGRANTS TAKEN WITH SICKNESS

The climate of Madinah contrasts strongly with that of Makkah. In summer, the days are intensely hot; a climate of more endurable and less sultry heat, however, than at Makkah; but the nights are cool and often chilly. The cold in winter (from October to April) and stormy weather is severe; ice is, for the latitude, severe, especially after rain, which falls heavily in occasional but not long-continued showers.

Even in summer, these are not infrequent. Heavy rain always deluges the adjacent country. The drainage in some quarters is sluggish, and after a storm the water forms a widespread lake in the open space between the city and the southern suburb. The humid exhalations from this and other stagnant pools, and perhaps the luxuriant[33] vegetation in the neighborhood, render the stranger susceptible to attacks of intermittent fever, which is often followed by swelling and tumors in the legs and stomach, and sometimes proves fatal.

The cold in winter, and stormy weather, is very severe; ice and snow are known in the adjoining hills; which is not unnatural, if the city be 6,000 feet above the sea: but this estimation is perhaps exaggerated. The height, however, must be great, as the rise of the mountains is rapid and continuous on the western side, and the descent insignificant on the eastern, from the crest to the city.[34]

The city is much exposed to storms. Chilly and violent winds from the eastern deserts are much dreaded; and though Uhud screens the town on the north and northeast, a gap in the mountains to the northwest fills the air at times with rain and comfortless blasts. The rains begin in October and last with considerable intervals through the winter; the clouds, gathered by the hill tops and the trees near the town, discharge themselves with violence; and at the equinoxes, thunderstorms are common. At such times, the Barr al-Munakhah, or the open space between the town and the suburbs, is a sheet of water, and the land about the south and southeast wall of the suburb, a lake.

Accustomed to the dry air and parched soil of Makkah, the refugees were severely tried by the dampness of the Madinah summer, and the rigor of its winter. The Prophet himself escaped, but the most of his followers were prostrated by fever. Abu Bakr and his whole household suffered greatly. Some time after, Ayisha related to the Messenger how they all wandered in their speech from the intensity of the fever, and how they longed to return to their Makkan home; on which the Prophet, looking upwards, prayed: O Lord! make Madinah dear unto us, even as Makkah, or even dearer. Bless its produce, and banish far from it the pestilence![35]

To raise the spirits of his followers thus depressed by sickness, to draw them into closer union with the Madinah converts, and counteract their pining after home, the Messenger established a new fraternity between the Emigrants and the Helpers.

## THE COVENANT OF BROTHERHOOD BETWEEN THE EMIGRANTS AND THE HELPERS

The Messenger then initiates something else: the covenant of brotherhood. Through this means, the Messenger unites 300 Emigrants and Helpers who, along with their families, are to form the leadership core of the Community (*ummah*).

The Helpers consist of the two tribes of the Aws and Khazraj who have had a long standing enmity. Now, however, the members of these two tribes, who had invited the Messenger of God to their city, gather around him as a moth does to a candle.

In addition to the enmity among the Helpers, stemming from old grievances, differences of opinion now arise between the Helpers and Emigrants, as well. Each group has developed in a different environment with different customs and beliefs, each believing itself to be superior to the other. The Emigrants would say: The Messenger is from our family, while the laurels of the Helpers rested on the fact that they gave refuge and powerful support and help to the Messenger at a time of need.

In order to end these arguments, the Messenger was commanded by God to strengthen the unity of the *ummah*, by having each one become the brother of the other. Each Helper was to give half of his property and income to his brother Emigrant. In this way, the Messenger confirmed and emphasized political and spiritual unity among Muslims and transformed a long-lived enmity into friendship. All Muslims became part of the same framework.[36]

The Messenger instituted brotherhood between his fellow emigrants and the helpers saying: Let each of you take a brother in God. He himself took Ali by the hand and said: This is my brother.

So God's Messenger, the lord of the sent ones and leader of the God-fearing, Messenger of the Lord of the worlds, the peerless and unequalled, and Ali ibn Abu Talib became brothers.

Hamza, the lion of God and the lion of his Messenger and his uncle, became the brother of Zayd ibn Haritha, the Messenger's freedman. To him Hamza gave his last testament on the day of Uhud when battle was imminent in case he should meet his death.

Jafar ibn Abu Talib—the one of the wings who was to fly in Paradise—and Muadh ibn Jabal, brother of ibn Salama, became brothers.

The pairs were arranged thus:

Abu Bakr and Kharija ibn Zuhayr brother of ibn al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj.

Umar and Itban ibn Malik brother of ibn Salim ibn al-Khazraj.

Abu Ubayda, Amir ibn Abd Allah and Saad ibn Muadh ibn al-Numan.

Abd al-Rahman ibn Auf and Sad ibn al-Rabi brother of ibn al-Harith.

al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam and Salama ibn Salama ibn Waqsh, brother of ibn Abdul Ashhal though others say that he linked up with Abd Allah ibn Masud, the ally of the ibn Zuhra.

Uthman ibn Affan and Aus ibn Thabit ibn al-Mundhir, brother of ibn al-Najjar.

Talha ibn Ubayd Allah and Kab ibn Malik, brother of the ibn Salama.

Sad ibn Zayd ibn Amr ibn Nufayl and Ubayy ibn Kab, brother of the ibn al-Najjar.

Musab ibn Umayr and Abu Ayyub Khalid ibn Zayd, brother of the ibn al-Najjar.

Abu Hudhayfa ibn Utba and Abbad ibn Bishr ibn Waqsh, brother of the ibn Abdul Ashhal.

Ammar ibn Yasir, ally of the ibn Makhzum and Hudhayfa ibn al-Yaman, brother of ibn Abd al-Abs, ally of the ibn Abd al-Ashhal. Others say that Thabit ibn Qays ibn al-Shammas brother of the ibn al-Harith ibn al-Khazraj the prophets orator and Ammar ibn Yasir.

Abu Dharr, Burayr ibn Junada al-Ghifari and al-Mundhir ibn Amr called: he who hastened to his death, brother of ibn Saida of al-Khazraj.

Hatib ibn Abu Baltaa, ally of ibn Asad ibn Abdul Uzza and Uwaym ibn Saida, brother of ibn Amr ibn Auf.

Salman the Persian and Abu al-Darda Uwaymir ibn Thalaba brother of ibn al-Harith. Some say Uwaymir was the son of Amir or of Zayd.

Bilal freedman of Abu Bakr and the Messengers muezzin and Abu Ruwayha.

Abd Allah ibn Abd al-Rahman al-Khathami, more precisely one of the Faza.

These are the men who were named to us as those to whom the Messenger made his companions brothers.[37]

Accordingly each of the refugees selected one of the citizens as his brother. The bond was of the closest description, and involved not only a peculiar devotion to each other's interests in the persons thus associated, but in case of death it superseded the claims of blood, the "brother" becoming exclusive heir to all the property of the deceased. From forty-five to fifty refugees were thus united to as many citizens of Madinah.

This peculiar custom lasted for about a year and a half, when the Messenger finding it, after the victory of Badr, to be no longer necessary for the encouragement of his followers, abolished the bond, and suffered inheritance to take its usual course.

The mosque, and the adjoining houses, were finished within seven months from the Prophet's arrival. About the middle of winter, he left the house of Abu Ayyub, and installed Sawda in her new residence. Shortly afterwards, he celebrated his nuptials with Ayisha, who, though she had been three years affianced, was but a girl of ten or twelve years. He consummated the marriage in her father's house at al-Sunh and then brought her to the apartments adjoining those of Sawda.

## FOUNDATIONS LAID FOR THE FIRST MOSQUE IN MADINAH

The Messenger ordered that a mosque should be built, and he had stayed with Abu Ayyub until the mosque and his houses were completed. The Messenger joined in the work to encourage the Muslims to work and the Emigrants and the Helpers labored hard. One of the Muslims rhymed:

If we sat down while the prophet worked
It could be said that we had shirked.
As they built, the Muslims sang a *rajaz* verse:
There;s no life but the life of the next world.
O God, have mercy on the Helpers and the Emigrants.

The Messenger used to sing it in the form:

There's no life but the life of the next world.
O God, have mercy on the Emigrants and Helpers.

Ammar ibn Yasir came in when they had overloaded him with bricks, saying: They are killing me. They load me with burdens they can't carry themselves.

Ali composed a *rajaz* verse on that day:

There's one that labors night and day
To build us mosques of brick and clay
And one who turns from dust away!

And Ammar learned it and began to chant it..

Sufyan ibn Uyayna mentioned on the authority of Zakariya from al-Shabi that the first man to build a mosque was Ammar ibn Yasir.

The Messenger lived in Abu Ayyub's house until his mosque and dwelling-houses were built. Abu Ayyub said: We used to prepare his evening meal and send it to him. When he returned what was left, Umm Ayyub and I used to touch the spot where his hand had rested and eat from that in the hope of gaining a blessing.

The emigrants followed one another to join the Messenger, and none was left in Makkah but those who had apostatized or been detained. Whole families with their property did not come together except the ibn Mazan from ibn Jumah; the ibn Jahsh ibn Riab, allies of ibn Umayya; and the ibn Bukayr from ibn Sad ibn Layth, allies of ibn Adiyy ibn Kab. Their houses in Makkah were locked up when they migrated, leaving no inhabitant.

When the ibn Jahsh gave up their house, Abu Sufyan went and sold it to Amr ibn Alqama, brother of ibn Amir ibn Luayy. When the owners heard of this, Abd Allah ibn Jahsh told the Messenger of it, and he replied: Are you not pleased that God will give you a better house in Paradise?

And when he answered: Yes, he said: Then you have it.

When the Messenger got possession of Makkah, Abu Ahmad spoke to him about their house; and the Messenger delayed his reply. People said to him: The Messenger dislikes your reopening the question of your property which you lost in God's service, so don't speak to him about it again.

Abu Ahmad said in reference to Abu Sufyan: Tell Abu Sufyan of a matter he will live to regret. You sold your cousins; house to pay a debt you owed. Your ally by God the Lord of men swears an oath: Take it, Take it, may [your treachery] cling to you like the ring of the dove.

The Messenger stayed in Madinah from the month of Rabi I to Safar of the following year until his mosque and his quarters were built. This tribe of the Helpers all accepted Islam and every house of the Helpers accepted Islam except Khatma, Waqif, Wail, and Umayya who were the Aus Allah, a clan of Aus who clung to their idolatry.

The Messenger praised and glorified God as was His due and then said: O men, send forward (good works) for yourselves. You know, by God, that one of you may be smitten and will leave his flock without a shepherd. Then his Lord will say to him—there will be no interpreter or chamberlain to veil him from Him. Did not My Messenger come to you with a message, and did not I give you wealth and show you favor? What have you sent forward for yourself? Then will he look to right and left and see nothing; he will look in front of him and see nothing but hell. He who can shield his face from the fire even with a little piece of date let him do so; and he who cannot find that then with a good word; for the good deed will be rewarded tenfold yea to twice seven hundred -fold. Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessing.

Then the Messenger preached on another occasion as follows:

> Praise belongs to God whom I praise and whose aid I implore. We take refuge in God from our own sins and from the evil of our acts. He whom God guides none can lead astray; and whom He leads astray none can guide. I testify that there is no God but He alone, He is without companion. The finest speech is the Book of God. He to whom God has made it seem glorious and made him enter Islam after unbelief, who has chosen it above all other speech of men, does prosper. It is the finest speech and the most penetrating. Love what God loves. Love God with all your hearts, and weary not of the word of God and its mention. Harden not your hearts from it. Out of everything that God creates He chooses and selects; the actions He chooses He calls *khira*; the people He chooses He calls *mustafa*; and the speech He chooses He calls *salih*. From everything that is brought to man there is the lawful and the unlawful. Worship God and associate naught with Him; be conscious of Him as He ought to be remembered; Carry out loyally towards God what you say with your

mouths. Love one another in the spirit of God. Verily God is angry when His covenant is broken. Peace be upon you.

The site of the mosque is probably the same as that now occupied by the great mosque of Madinah. It was built four square, each side being one hundred cubits, or somewhat less, in length. The foundations, to three cubits above the ground, were built of stone; the rest of the wall was of brick. The roof was supported by trunks of palm-trees, and covered over with branches and rafters of the same material. The *qibla* was due north.

At the time of formal prayer, the Messenger stood near the northern wall, looking towards Jerusalem; his back was thus turned upon the congregation, who stood in rows behind him, facing in the same direction. When he preached he turned round towards them. To the south, opposite the *qibla*, was a gate for general entrance.[38]

Another opened on the west, called the Atika or Rahmah, the Gate of Mercy, a name it still retains. A third gate, on the eastern side, was reserved for the use of Muhammad. South of this gate, and forming part of the eastern wall of the mosque, were the apartments destined for the Prophet's wives. The house of Ayisha was at the extreme southeast corner, the road into the mosque passing behind it. That of Sawda was next; and beyond it were the apartments of Ruqayya and her husband, Uthman, and of the two other daughters of the Prophet.[39]

From these he had private entrances into the Mosque, used only by himself. The eastern gate probably still bears in its name—Bab al-Nisa or the Women's Gate. To the north the ground was open. On that side a place was appropriated for the poorer followers of the Messenger who had no home of their own. They slept in the mosque, and had a sheltered porch outside. The Prophet used to send them portions from his table; and others followed his example. But in a few years victory and plunder caused poverty and distress to disappear, and the People of the Porch lived only in memory. To be near the Prophet, his chief Companions by degrees erected houses for themselves in the vicinity of the mosque; some of these adjoined upon its court, and had doors opening directly on it.

It is to the north of the Mosque, as thus existing in the time of the Prophet, that subsequent additions were mainly made. The Prophet was asked why he did not build a permanent roof to his house of prayer. He said: The thatch is as the thatching of Moses, rafters and small pieces of wood; the human's estate is more fleeting even than this. But though rude in material, and comparatively insignificant in extent, the mosque of the Messenger is glorious in the history of Islam.[40]

Here the Messenger and his Companions spent the greater portion of their

time. Here the daily service, with its oft-recurring prayers, was first publicly established. Here the great congregation assembled every week, and trembled often while they listened to the sermons of the Messenger and the messages from heaven. Here he planned his victories. From this spot he sent forth envoys to kings and emperors with the summons to embrace Islam. Here he received the embassies of contrite and believing tribes; and from hence issued commands which carried consternation among the rebellious to the very ends of the Peninsula.

### ABU UMAMA

During the months in which the mosque was being built Abu Umama Asad ibn Zurara died. He was seized with diphtheria and a rattling in the throat. When Abu Umama died, the ibn al-Najjar came to the Messenger, for Abu Umama was their leader, saying that he held the high rank the Messenger knew of and would he appoint someone from among them to act in his place, to which the Messenger replied: You are my maternal uncles, and we belong together so I will be your leader. The Messenger did not want to prefer any one of them to the others. Henceforth the ibn al-Najjar regarded themselves as highly honored in having the Messenger as their leader.

### THE CALL TO THE FORMAL PRAYER

When the Messenger was firmly settled in Madinah and his brothers, the Emigrants were gathered to him and the affairs of the Helpers were arranged, Islam became firmly established. Prayer was instituted, the purifying alms tax and fasting were prescribed, legal punishments fixed, the forbidden and the permitted prescribed, and Islam took up its abode with them. It was this clan of the helpers who have taken up their abode (in the city of the Prophet) and in the faith. When the Messenger first came, the people gathered to him for formal prayer at the appointed times without being summoned. At first the Messenger thought of using a trumpet like that of the Jews who used it to summon to formal prayer. Afterwards he disliked the idea and ordered a clapper to be made, so it was duly fashioned to be beaten when the Muslims should pray.

Meanwhile Abd Allah ibn Zayd ibn Thalaba ibn Abd al-Rabbihi, brother of ibn al-Harith, heard a voice in a dream, and came to the Messenger saying: A phantom visited me in the night. There passed by me a man wearing two green garments carrying a clapper in his hand, and I asked him to sell it to me. When he asked me what I wanted it for I told him that it was to summon people to prayer, whereupon he offered to show me a better way: it was to say thrice: God is Greater. I bear witness that there is no god but God. I bear witness that the Messenger is the Messenger of God. Come to prayer. Come to prayer. Come to divine service. Come to divine service. God is Greater. God is Greater. There is no god but God.

When the Messenger was told of this he said that it was a true vision if God so willed it, and that he should go with Bilal and communicate it to him so that he might call to formal prayer thus, for he had a more penetrating voice.

A woman of ibn al-Najjar said: My house was the highest of those round the mosque and Bilal used to give the call from the top of it at dawn every day. He used to come before daybreak and would sit on the housetop waiting for the dawn. When he saw it he would stretch his arms and say: O God, I praise **You** and ask **Your** help for Quraysh that they may accept **Your** religion. I never knew him to omit these words for a single night.

### FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY (UMMAH)

The political, social, and economic base of the Community is then formed by the Messenger by means of two revolutionary acts:The Covenant of Brotherhood and the Madinah Constitution.

### THE MADINAH CONSTITUTION

After building the mosque and its surrounding rooms, the Constitution of Madinah is drawn up. It is to become the world's first written Constitution. Because of its importance, the full text appears here.

The document has been preserved by Ibn Hisham. It is an agreement to form a republic for mutual support between the clan of Emigrants, those who had migrated from Makkah, and the Helpers[41] those who live in Madinah, together with eight smaller clans who all accept the Messenger as their leader.

The republic is an Islamic polity for two reasons. First of all, blood ties are no longer considered as the criterion. Secondly, it is an Islamic polity because of its tolerance of other monotheistic faiths, namely, the Jewish and Christian "People of the Book."

On the religious side, the Emigrants and Helpers accept the Messenger as the Messenger of God, their supreme leader and guide in all matters, spiritual and temporal. The Jewish tribes, however, accept him only as political leader. Three large groups of Jewish clans of Madinah did not participate in this pledge, the Qaynuqa, the Nadir, and the Qurayzah tribes while the Jews of the Khazraj and the Aws tribes, and the idolaters signed. Later the Messenger is to sign separate agreements with the other clans.

### THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY (*UMMAH*)

Prior to the migration of the Messenger from Makkah to Madinah, covenants existed among the individual tribes, but nothing to compare to this political, economic, and social move of the Messenger. With a sudden move, the Messenger changes, for the first time, a tribal society into a society based on the same faith and the same slogan: Say: God is One and be saved.

This act, which is so easily completed, consists of a change which in the view of sociology would have taken several centuries to accomplish. But the

Messenger accomplishes this act and calls this society *ummah* or Community.

The Community does not refer to a group of individuals who ban together. This can be called a society or a nation, but not an *ummah*. To come to know the *ummah* is to come to know the goal and purpose of Islam, that is, to come to know that which Islam wants the monotheist human being to develop into, a Community of people whose common bond is their belief in the One God, in the resurrection, and in justice and equality for all in humble submission to God. Guided by the Quran, the Messenger is able to develop the basis for the perfect Community.

Prophets before him had said to the people: Oh human beings, if you accept our religion and act according to this book and these rules, your society will be like such and such..., but none of them are able to achieve it themselves.

Yet, in a far distant village known as Yathrib, the Messenger of Islam initiates a society, the first building of which he helps to build with his own hands. Little by little he lays the spiritual, moral, and material foundations for his society. In a period of ten years with more than sixty-five *jihad*s or military campaigns and armed conflicts, this society exemplifies and defends the laws sent by God through His Messenger. The Prophet thus brings not only a divinely-revealed Book, but the living example of that Book, as put into practice in a model Community, as well.[42]

The word *ummah* comes from *umm* which both means way and going upon a way, leadership and seeking participation in a general movement. It means to go. *Ummah* is a society based on movement. An *ummah* consists of human beings who are unified in where they are going. Thus the meaning of movement in one direction, towards one orientation, and upon a common way is the basic infrastructure for building an *ummah* in Islam. *Ummah* consists of a society in which class, race, and anti-human systems are changed into a system based upon human unity. The common aspect of these individuals consists of one common direction, participation in a common movement and continuous rebirth of human individuals. This is the mission of the individual members of the Community..

Look at the ten years in Madinah. The Messenger and his Companions do not remain silent one day. The gates to Madinah are open. There is always movement. The philosophy of this society is not consumption nor collecting the spoils of war and then sitting around and celebrating for four days nor extravagant living. Life is struggle (*jihad*) and continuous movement. This is the philosophy of the Community. It is a group of people of all races, all classes, both genders, held together by the belief that God is One, that the Quran is His revelation, revealed to the Messenger, that the Messenger is the leader and model to be followed, and that Gods promise is ever true and there will be a Day of Judgment.

## STATE OF PARTIES AT MADINAH

The enthusiasm displayed by the inhabitants of Parties of Madinah, on their first reception of the Prophet, by degrees found time to subside. The several parties began to settle down into their normal state, and to assume the relations which they were thenceforward permanently to hold. It will be of service to glance for a moment at each of these parties.

The followers of the Messenger who had forsaken their homes and preceded or accompanied him in exile were called by the afterwards illustrious title of Emigrants. They are a devoted band, forward to acknowledge the Prophet. Upon them he could depend to the uttermost.

Emigrants refer to those converts also who from time to time joined the Messenger at Madinah, coming either from Makkah or from any other quarter, up to the taking of Makkah in 8 CE. The number of the Emigrants was then closed. It was only while Makkah was under an idolatrous government that there was any merit in emigrating from it. Next come the converts of Madinah. Bound to the Messenger by fewer ties of blood and antecedent fellowship, they did not yield to the Emigrants in loyalty to him, or in enthusiasm for Islam. They had made less outward sacrifice; but their pledge at Aqaba had involved them in serious risks, as well from their own countrymen, should they disclaim the engagement, as from the Makkans.

In short, they had compromised themselves almost as deeply as the Emigrants. Plighted only to defend the Messenger in case of attack, they soon practically identified themselves with the Emigrants in all offensive measures against his enemies. Hence they were styled Helpers. But as, in process of time, the Messenger/Prophet found many other auxiliaries amongst the Arab tribes. To prevent confusion, they are spoken of as the men of Madinah.

The ancient feuds of the Aws and Khazraj were professedly forgotten amongst the converts at Madinah. The very acceptance of the faith required that they should acknowledge not only the spiritual but also the temporal authority of the Messenger, and regard themselves all as brethren. Having surrendered themselves wholly to his will and government, there was little room left for internal rivalries. Still, the memory of their long standing jealousy and strife was not always suppressed by the lessons of religion; and believer was often arrayed against believer in unseemly, and sometimes dangerous, contention.

We have no precise data for calculating the proportion of the inhabitants thus actively ranged on the side of the Messenger. The seventy-five adherents who pledged themselves at Aqaba were but the representatives of a larger body left behind at Madinah; and the cause of Islam had since then been daily gaining ground. We may conclude that the professed converts at this time numbered several hundreds.

The Aws and Khazraj were either neutral or, at least outwardly, passive in their unbelief. There was no active opposition, nor, as at Makkah, any open

denial of the Messenger. There was, furthermore, no direct antagonism to his temporal authority over his own adherents. The peculiar constitution of Arab society, which admitted the residence of several detached bodies at the same place, each under its separate independent chief, enabled the Messenger freely to exercise an absolute and sovereign control over his own people, without, for the time, extending his claims to any further jurisdiction.

But, though there was no apparent hostility, and the whole of the citizens, unbelievers as well as converts, held themselves bound to fulfil the pledge of protection to the exile, yet a strong undercurrent of jealousy and discontent was rapidly setting in against him. We have before seen that Abd Allah ibn Ubay, the chief man of the Khazrajites, and the most powerful citizen in all Madinah, was aspiring to the regal dignity, when his hopes were blighted by the arrival of the Messenger. Around Abd Allah rallied the numerous party which was sceptical of the Prophet's claims, and unfriendly to the extension of his rule; but these were unable to stem the tide of the stranger's popularity. The circle of his adherents steadily expanded, and soon embraced nominally the whole city. Idolatry disappeared, and scepticism over-matched, was forced to hide its head.[43]

### HYPOCRITES BEGIN TO SHOW THEMSELVES

One day the Messenger saddled his ass, and went forth to inquire after Saad ibn Obayda, who was sick. By the way he passed Abd Allah, sitting with a circle of his followers under the shade of his house. Muhammad's courtly manners would not permit him to pass without speaking; so he alighted, and saluted him, and sat a little while beside him, reciting some portion of the Quran, inviting him to God. Abd Allah listened quietly till he had ended: then he said: Nothing could be better than this discourse of yours if it were true. Now, therefore, do you sit at home in your own house, and whosoever comes to you preach thus to him, and he that comes not to you refrain from troubling him, or intruding into his circle with that which he dislikes.

The Messenger went his way, downcast at that which Abd Allah, the enemy of God, had said unto him; which Saad perceiving, inquired the cause. the Messenger recited what Abd Allah had said. Then Saad replied: Treat him gently, for I swear that when God sent you to us, we had already strung pearls to crown him, and he sees that you have snatched the kingdom out of his grasp.[44]

Real belief in the Messenger was not, however, of such rapid growth. Doubts and jealousies possessed the hearts of many, and in private, at a convenient distance from the Messenger, found free expression. They complained that they had foolishly espoused a cause which would make them run the gauntlet of all Arabia; and for what return? Only to lose their liberties, and to bring themselves under bondage to a foreign usurper. The class which cherished these sentiments were styled the Hypocrites.[45]

The Jewish tribes located in the vicinity of Madinah were on an entirely different footing. The Messenger had not only acknowledged the divine authority of their religion, but rested his own claims, in an important degree, upon the evidence of their Scriptures, and the testimony of their learned men. No object was nearer his heart than a combination with them. His feasts, his fasts, his ceremonies, were, up to this time, framed in close correspondence with Jewish custom. Jerusalem itself was his *qibla*. Towards that holy spot, the Prophet, and all his followers, turned five times a day while they prostrated themselves in formal prayer. There was no sacrifice that the Messenger was not prepared to make, short of the abandonment of his claim to the prophetic office, in order to gain the Jews over to his cause.

It was natural that the Messenger, holding these sentiments, should desire to enter into close union combination with the Jews. This he did in a formal manner shortly after reaching Madinah; for he associated them in a treaty of mutual obligation, drawn up in writing, between the Emigrants and the people of Madinah, in which he confirmed the Jews in the practice of their religion, and in the secure possession of their property. The main provisions of this Contract, as given to us by Ibn Ishaq, are the following:

### THE CONSTITUTION OF MADINAH

In the Name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful.

(1) This is a document from Muhammad the Messenger (governing the relations) between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and labored with them.

(2) They are one community (*umma*) to the exclusion of all people.

(3) The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.

(4-8) The Auf Clan according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit they paid in the era of idolatry; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers. The Saida, al-Harith, Jusham, and al-Najjar Clans likewise.

(9-11) The Amr b. Auf, al-Nabit and the al-Aus Clans likewise.

(12)(a) Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or bloodwit in kindness.

(12)(b) A believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Muslim against him.

(13) The God-conscious believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice, or sin or animosity, or corruption between believers; the hand of every man shall be against him

even if he be a son of one of them.

(14) A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he aid an unbeliever against a believer.

(15) God's protection is one, the least of them may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders.

(16) To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided.

(17) The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of God. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all.

(18) In every foray a rider must take another behind him.

(19) The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God.

(20)(a) The God-conscious believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance.

(20)(b) No idolater shall take the property of person of Quraysh under his protection nor shall he intervene against a believer.

(21) Whoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

(22) It shall not be lawful to a believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in God and the last day to help an evildoer or to shelter him. The curse of God and His anger on the day of resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be received from him.

(23) Whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad.

(24) The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers.

(25) The Jews of the Auf Clan are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families.

(26-35) The same applies to the Jews of the al-Najjar, al-Harith, Saiida, Jusham, al-Aus, Thalaba, and the Jafna, a clan of the Thalaba and the al-Shutayba Clans. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The freedmen of Thalaba are as themselves. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves.

(36) None of them shall go out to war save the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his

household, unless it be one who has wronged him, for God will accept that.

(37) The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped.

(38) The Jews must pay with the believers so long as war lasts.

(39) Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document.

(40) A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime.

(41) A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family.

(42) If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise it must be referred to God and to Muhammad, the Messenger of God. God accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document.

(43) The ungrateful Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection.

(44) The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib.

(45)(a) If they are called to make peace and maintain it they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Muslims it must be carried out except in the case of a holy war.

(45)(b) Every one shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs.

(46) The Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in purely loyalty from the people of this document. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. He who acquires ought acquires it for himself. God approves of this document.

(47) This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city is safe unless he has been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-conscious man and the Messenger is the Messenger of God.[46]

### Actions of a Sovereign State

The Quraysh in Makkah are busy confiscating the property of the Muslims who had migrated to Madinah. In addition, there is no Muslim in Makkah who is free to express an opinion nor practice his faith. If the idolaters get hold of a Muslim, they torture him to the point of seriously wounding him. The Muslim has no choice but to leave Makkah, to leave behind his family,

means of livelihood, and property. This is the reason why a group has to migrate to Abyssinia and then, after the Agreement of Aqaba, to Madinah.

The lifeline of the Quraysh is their caravans. The goods taken to and brought back from Yemen and Syria form the economic base of their society. If their trade routes are to be closed by the Muslims and the people who have formed an agreement with the Muslims, their system would fall apart. Threats by the Muslims to the commercial caravans of the idolaters, causes them to reconsider harming or torturing Muslims in Makkah or plundering property owned by Muslims.

The sending out of groups of Muslims to threaten the caravans is a military manoeuver to create fear in the hardened hearts of the enemy who had for thirteen years prevented Muslims from expressing themselves and practicing their religious beliefs. These manoeuvers prevent the torture of the Muslims in Makkah and the confiscation of their property, finally culminating in the free traffic of Muslims to and from Makkah as well as freeing the propagation of Islam to some extent.

The first six months of the Prophet's residence at Madinah were undisturbed either by alarms from without, or by hostile counsels at home. No vindictive measures were planned by the citizens of Makkah. He who had for more than ten years kept the city in continual excitement, broken up their old political parties, and introduced a new faction of his own, was now gone forth with all his adherents, and his absence afforded immediate relief. The current of events, long diverted and troubled by his designs, now returned, to flow peaceably, for a while, in its ancient channel.

The people of Madinah were pledged only to defend the Messenger from attack, not to join him in any aggressive steps against the Quraysh idolaters. He must take time to gain their affections, and to secure their hearty co-operation in offensive measures against his enemies. His followers from Makkah were too few to measure arms with the Quraysh idolaters. They were also, like himself, at present occupied in providing dwelling-places for their families.

In fulfilling this domestic obligation, in establishing friendly relations with the citizens of Madinah and the Jewish tribes, in organizing civil and religious institutions for his followers, now fast assuming the position of an independent society, and in riveting the hold of his government upon their minds.

The purpose of the Messenger for sending out groups to intimate the Quraysh or participating himself in a group that threatens the Quraysh caravan by their very presence is so that the Quraysh become aware of the importance of the situation which is that their trade routes, whether from Makkah to Yemen through Taif or from Makkah to Syria, will be under surveillance by the Islamic forces. Whenever the Muslim forces want, they can prevent the free flow of their trade or confiscate all of their goods. With the Messengers

policy of preventing the development of the negative, the Quraysh will think twice before harming Muslims in Makkah or confiscating Makkan property of Muslims who migrated to Madinah.

## THE MESSENGER IS GIVEN PERMISSION TO FIGHT

The Messenger had not been given permission to fight before the Second Pledge of Aqaba. He had simply been ordered to call men to God and to endure insult and forgive the ignorant. The Quraysh had persecuted his followers, seducing some from their religion, and exiling others from their country. They had to choose whether to give up their religion, be maltreated at home, or to flee the country, some to Abyssinia, others to Madinah.

### PERMISSION TO FIGHT°

*Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. And, truly, Powerful is God to help them,* (22:39) *those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.*(22:40) *Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.*(22:41)

*Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged* (22:39), because they are the ones at the receiving end of wrongful aggression. They are reassured that God will grant them His support and protection: *And, truly, Powerful is God to help them.* (22:39)

Furthermore, they have all the justification for going to war. They have been chosen to undertake a great humanitarian task, the benefits of which will not be theirs alone. Indeed these benefits will accrue to all believers. Their fight will ensure that people shall enjoy the freedom of belief and worship. Besides, they are the ones who have been wronged, the ones driven out of their homes without valid justification: *Those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God!* (22:40)

It is the most truthful word any person can say, and the word everyone should say. Yet, it is because of their saying this that they have been driven out of their homes. Therefore, why such injustice does not carry any semblance of right action. The Quranic statement

makes it clear that these victims of aggression have no personal objective to fight for; instead, they fight only for their faith. They seek no worldly gain. Personal and national interests that give rise to conflicts, alliances and wars are of no appeal to them. Beyond that, we have the general rule that makes it clear that faith needs to be defended: *If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (22:40)

We note here that the (22:40) mentions monasteries where priests devote all their time to worship, as well as places of public worship for Christians, Jews and Muslims. They are all vulnerable and can be destroyed, despite their sanctity and dedication for worship. Evil will not respect the fact that these places are made for extolling God's name. They are protected only through people's efforts, with the advocates of faith standing up to repel falsehood's aggression. Indeed, falsehood and evil will not stop their aggression unless they realize that the truth has enough power to counter their own. Truth may he valued by people, but such value is not enough to provide it with protection against aggression in this world. It requires the appropriate means of self defense.

### SIGNS IN CHAPTER 2 REVEALED

*And fight in the Way of God those who fight you, but exceed not the limits. Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (2:190) *And kill them wherever you came upon them, and drive them out from wherever they drove you out. And persecution is more grave than killing. And fight them not near the Masjid al-Haram unless they fight you in it. But if they fought you, then kill them. Thus, this is the recompense for the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:191) *Then, if they refrained themselves, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:192) *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) *committed in the Sacred Month, in the Sacred Month and so reciprocation for all sacred things. So whoever exceeded the limits against you, exceed you the limits against him likewise as he exceeded the limits against you? Be God-conscious of God and know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* (2:194)

### VIOLATION OF SANCTITIES

The other restriction is that no fighting was allowed within the

vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, which God, in response to the Prophet Abraham's prayers, had declared a safe haven and an inviolable house of peace. However, those who desecrate the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque and commit aggression against Muslims there must be fought and should not be spared. Their vile actions and their persecution of Muslims, committed as they are within the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque, can only be rewarded with severe punishment. (2:192)

To earn God's forgiveness and mercy, they should not simply desist from waging war against the Muslims and trying to force them to abandon their faith. They would be required to renounce their denial of God and their rejection of His Message. The most they can expect in return for refraining from attacking the Muslims and persecuting them would be a truce, but that would not be sufficient to merit God's forgiveness and mercy. The ungrateful are, therefore, invited and encouraged to believe so that they may enjoy God's mercy and forgiveness.

The aim of war in the Quranic message is to let people be free to uphold the Quranic message and practice it, and never find themselves, by virtue of either direct force or the type of social, political or economic system they live under, compelled to renounce it. The growth and spread of the Quranic message must not be hampered or restricted, and the Muslim community must be allowed the means to defend itself and deter its enemies from taking advantage of it. No one who wishes to adopt Islam should feel threatened. If such threats are made, the Muslim community is collectively obliged to do all it can to eliminate that threat and secure the success of the Quranic message. (2:193)

These statements were revealed to deal with a specific situation in Arabia, when the pagan Arabs were persecuting an incipient Muslim community and stifling the spread of the Quranic message. Nevertheless, they remain valid, and jihad is incumbent on Muslims until the end of time. Whenever a tyrant or an oppressive power emerges and prevents people from upholding the Quranic message or seeks to prevent them from knowing about it, the Muslim community must rise against it and secure for all the right of freedom to know the truth, listen to it, and have the choice to accept it freely.

It is clear how severely these signs condemn oppression and persecution. It is considered a more repugnant evil than murder. This emphasis makes it clear that the Quranic message views this matter most gravely. It establishes another crucial universal principle, heralding a rebirth of humanity, according to which a human being's value is determined by his faith. Human life is always outweighed

by his religious beliefs.

This principle also identifies the true enemies of humanity in this world. They are those who persecute believers and inflict suffering on a Muslim for no reason other than his being a Muslim. They are those who stand between humanity and God's truth and guidance. It is these that Muslims are obliged to fight and destroy: (2:193)

Having ruled on fighting during the sacred months, the Chapter now gives the ruling on fighting in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. (2:194) Those who violate the sacred months cannot expect guarantees of peace and immunity from attack during it. God had declared the Sacred Mosque a safe haven and a place of peace, and designated the sacred months a time of truce and security.

During these months no blood shall be shed, all sacred places and property shall be immune, and the safety of every living thing is guaranteed. Those who are bent on infringing this peace must not escape unpunished. The Muslims are instructed to retaliate in a measured way and within the limits dictated by the type and extent of the initial aggression. (2:194)

There should be no excessive retribution. Muslims are here left to their own conscience and their consciousness of God. They realize that their own victory depends on God's help and support, and are therefore reminded that God is on the side of those who fear Him — — a supremely effective safeguard.

The passage goes as far as describing the reluctance to contribute financially as folly leading to self-destruction. It says: (2:195) Miserliness and greed are indeed a form of self-destruction for the individual as well as for society as a whole. They result in deprivation and weakness of the whole community, especially one whose affairs are dependant on voluntary, self-motivated contributions.

The Quran goes on to recommend even a higher state of excellence: (2:195) The Arabic term used here is *ihsan*, whose connotations from the Quranic message are difficult to convey in translation. It is the highest level of altruism and self-denial. The Prophet Muhammad defines it as: Worshipping God as if you see Him with your own eyes; for, though you cannot see Him, He certainly sees you. Once this stage of piety is reached, one will become a consummate devotee, utterly obedient to God in everything; and all one's resources, energies and life will be entirely dedicated to God Almighty.

This closing comment is a befitting end for a passage dealing with fighting and giving for God's cause. It urges believers to aspire to the level of *ihsan*, the highest grade of religious excellence.

*Fighting was prescribed for you although it is disliked by you. And perhaps you dislike a thing and it is good for you. And perhaps you love a thing, and it is worse for you. And God knows and, truly, you know not.* (2:216)

To take up arms in support of a cause blessed by God is a demanding duty, but is nevertheless necessary because it serves the good of Muslim individuals and communities as well as that of humanity as a whole. It also underpins what is good and right.

## HAMZA'S PATROL TO THE SEA-SHORE IN RAMADAN

In the first Ramadan in Madinah, the Messenger sends his brave officer, Hamza, with thirty cavalry men, who are all from among the Emigrants, to the shores of the Red Sea, which is the trade route along which the Quraysh caravans pass. They carry a white flag. They encounter a Quraysh caravan which is guarded with three hundred men in a place called Ais but any conflict is avoided because of the intermediary, Majdi ibn Amr, who is friends with both groups. The Muslims then return to Madinah.

**History**: While he was staying there he sent Hamza ibn Abdul Muttalib to the sea-, shore in the neighborhood of Al-Is (T. in the territory of Juhayna) with thirty riders from the Emigrants; none of the Helpers took part. He met Abu Jahl with three hundred riders from Mecca on the shore, and Majdl bin Amr al-Juhani intervened between them, for he was at peace with both parties. So the people separated one from another without fighting.

Some people say that Hamzas flag was the first which the Messenger gave to any Muslim because he sent him and Ubayda at the same time, and thus people became confused on the point. They alleged that Hamza had composed poetry in which he says that his flag was the first which the Messenger entrusted to anyone. Now if Hamza actually said that, it is true if God wills. He would not have said it if it were not true, but God knows what happened. We have heard from learned people that Ubayda was the first man to receive a flag.

## UBAYDAH IBN AL-HARITH'S EXPEDITION IN SHAWWAL

About a month later, Shawwal, H/ 622 CE, a party double the strength of the first, was sent under command of Ubayda, son of Harith, (he was a cousin of Muhammad, Harith having been the prophet's uncle) in pursuit of another caravan protected by Abu Sufyan with two hundred men. They encounter a Quraysh caravan under the leadership of Ikramah which is heavily guarded. They keep at a distance from one another so no conflict takes place. The only

consequence of it is that two Muslims who had been among the Quraysh caravan join Ubaydahs group.

> **History**: During that stay in Medina the Messenger sent Ubayda ibn al-Harith ibn al-Muttalib with sixty or eighty riders from the emigrants, there not being a single one of the Helpers among them. He went as far as water in the Hijaz below Thaniyatul Murra, where he encountered a large number of Quraysh idolaters. No fighting took place except that Sad ibn Abu Waqqas shot an arrow on that day. It was the first arrow to be shot in Islam. Then the two companies separated, the Muslims having a rearguard. Al-Miqdad ibn Amr al-Bahrani, an ally of the Zuhra, and Utba ibn Ghazwan ibn Jabir al-Mazini, an ally of the Naufal ibn Abdu Manaf, fled from the polytheists and joined the Muslims to whom they really belonged. They had gone out with the unbelievers in order to be able to link up with the Muslims. Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl was in command of the Meccans.

## THE EXPEDITION OF SAD IBN ABI WAQQAS TO KHARRAR

In the month of Dhu al-Qada, a third expedition started, under the youthful Saad ibn Abi Waqqas (now 20 or 25 years old) with twenty followers, in the same direction. He was desired to proceed as far as Kharrar, a valley on the road to Makkah, and to lie in wait for a caravan expected to pass that way. Like most of the subsequent expeditions intended to effect a surprise, they marched by night and lay in concealment during the day. Notwithstanding this precaution, when they reached their destination on the fifth morning, they found that the caravan had passed a day before, and they returned empty-handed to Madinah.

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These excursions occurred in the winter and spring of the year 622 CE. On each occasion, the Messenger mounted a white banner on a staff or lance, and presented it to the leader, on his departure. The names of those who carried the standard, as well as the names of the leaders, are carefully recorded in tradition in these and in all other expeditions of importance.

The purpose of the Messenger for sending out groups to intimate the Quraysh or participating himself in a group that threatens the Quraysh caravan by their very presence is so that the Quraysh become aware of the importance of the situation which is that their trade routes, whether from Makkah to Yemen through Taif or from Makkah to Syria, will be under surveillance by the Islamic forces. Whenever the Muslim forces want, they can prevent the free flow of their trade or confiscate all of their goods. With the Messengers policy of preventing the development of the negative, the Quraysh will think twice before harming Muslims in Makkah or confiscating Makkan property

of Muslims who migrated to Madinah.

**History**: The first six months of Muhammad's residence at Madinah were undisturbed either by alarms from without, or by hostile counsels at home. No vindictive measures were planned by the citizens of Makkah. He who had for more than ten years kept the city in continual excitement, broken up their old political parties, and introduced a new faction of his own, was now gone forth with all his adherents, and his absence afforded immediate relief. The current of events, long diverted and troubled by his designs, now returned, to flow peaceably, for a while, in its ancient channel.

The people of Madinah were pledged only to defend the Prophet from attack, not to join him in any aggressive steps against the Quraysh idolaters. He must take time to gain their affections, and to secure their hearty co-operation in offensive measures against his enemies. His followers from Makkah were too few to measure arms with the Quraysh idolaters. They were also, like himself, at present occupied in providing dwelling-places for their families. In fulfilling this domestic obligation, in establishing friendly relations with the citizens of Madinah and the Jewish tribes, in organizing civil and religious institutions for his followers, now fast assuming the position of an independent society, and in riveting the hold of his government upon their minds. The autumn of the first year passed away.

The earliest indications of hostility against the Quraysh idolaters were of a petty and marauding character. In Ramadan, seven months after his arrival, Muhammad despatched his uncle Hamza, at the head of thirty Emigrants, to surprise a Makkan caravan returning from Syria under the guidance of Abu Jahl This caravan, guarded by some 300 of the Quraysh idolaters, was overtaken near the sea-shore, between Makkah and Madinah, in the territory of the Bani Juhayna. A chief of that tribe, being a confederate of both, interposed between the two parties, who were already drawn up prepared for an encounter. Hamza retired to Madinah, and Abu Jahl proceeded onwards to Makkah. (Muhammad did not send the Madinah Helpers on any hostile expedition against the Quraysh idolaters until they had warred with him at Badr and the reason is that they had pledged themselves to protect him only at their homes. (*Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 48).

About a month later (Shawwal 1 AH; Jan 623 CE), a party double the strength of the first, was sent under command of Ubaydah, son of Harith, (he was a cousin of Muhammad, Harith having been the prophet's uncle.) in pursuit of another caravan protected by Abu Sufyan with 200 men. The Quraysh idolaters were surprised while their camels were grazing by a fountain in the valley of Rabigh (one

of the stages on the road to Makkah) but beyond the discharge of arrows from a distance, no hostilities were attempted. Ubayda is distinguished in tradition as the who shot the first arrow for Islam. Two followers of Muhammad, who were with the Quraysh idolaters' convoy, fled from it and joined the party of Ubayda. (The names of the deserters are Midad and Utba, both Quraysh. Miqdad carried the standard in the next expedition under Sad. (*Kitab al-Waqidi,* p 98; Hishami, p 207, Tabari, p 226).

After the lapse of another month, a third expedition started, under the youthful Sad ibn Abi Waqqas (now 20 or 25 years old) with twenty followers, in the same direction. He was desired to proceed as far as Kharrar, a valley on the road to Makkah, and to lie in wait for a caravan expected to pass that way. Like most of the subsequent expeditions intended to effect a surprise, they marched by night and lay in concealment during the day. Notwithstanding this precaution, when they reached their destination on the fifth morning, they found that the caravan had passed a day before, and they returned empty-handed to Madinah.

These excursions occurred in the winter and spring of the year 623 CE. On each occasion, Muhammad mounted a white banner on a staff or lance, and presented it to the leader, on his departure. The names of those who carried the standard, as well as the names of the leaders, are carefully recorded in tradition in these and in all other expeditions of importance.

## THE MESSENGER MARRIES AYISHA IN SHAWWAL

The Messenger marries Ayisha in the month of Shawwal.

# INTRODUCTION TO QURANIC CHAPTER 2
# THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

## COMMENTARY°

This Chapter is the first chapter to be revealed soon after the migration of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE. It is the longest Chapter in the Quran.

From the varied and wide-ranging context of its signs, it is safe to assume that they were not all revealed in sequence. A common feature of the long Madinan Chapters is that their signs were not revealed in consecutive order. Sometimes, passages of one Chapter were revealed before the completion of an earlier one. Therefore, the convention in deciding the chronological order of the Chapters has been based on the dates of the revelation of the opening passages, and not of the complete Chapter. In this instance, we find that 2:275-2:280, prohibiting usury, were among the last Quranic revelations, while the opening parts of the Chapter were revealed early in the Madinah period.

The composition and arrangement of the signs within each Chapter of the Quran is fixed by God and was directly intimated to Prophet Muhammad. Anyone who studies the Quran closely, and tastes the unique and rich experience of living within its ambience, will immediately identify the distinct character of every one of its Chapters. Every Chapter has an aura and a personality of its own, with unique and well-defined features, and a feel that makes it stand apart from all the rest. Moreover, every Chapter revolves around a central theme, or a number of major themes related to one another by a common thread or idea. Every Chapter radiates its own atmosphere of meaning and essence, within which its theme, or themes, are discussed using the same well integrated and well coordinated style and approach. It also has its own special rhythm and musical pulse which accord with the meaning and context of its topics and content. These general outstanding features are common to all Chapters, including the longer ones, such as the present one.

To set the contents of this Chapter in their appropriate context, it would be pertinent to throw more light on the historic environment and the religious and social setting in which the signs were revealed. Before we do that, however, it is important to point out that, in general terms, what the Muslims had to face in those early days was a miniature of, and a rehearsal for, what has occurred throughout the later history of Islam, albeit with some variations of scope and detail. The setbacks and the achievements, the allies and the opponents have invariably been the same. This fact highlights the role and status of

the Quran as the unchallenged, immutable and incontrovertible authoritative reference for the religious, ethical and legislative principles and systems of the Quranic message. It further affirms the unique property of the Quranic text as being ever fresh and responsive to the inevitable changes that come with the perpetuation and progress of human life.

With these qualities, the Quran remains the eternal guiding light for Muslims, despite the difficulties and hardships they have to suffer or the animosity and hostility they have to face. This, in itself, is an aspect of the inimitability and unsurpassed veracity and beauty of every sign in the Quran.

### SEEKING A SECURE BASE

The Prophet Muhammad's migration from Makkah to Madinah in 622 CE was undertaken after meticulous planning and with appropriate care and attention to detail. Leaving Makkah had become unavoidable in consequence of events: the indigenous, ungrateful Arabs of Makkah were pursuing a relentlessly hostile and oppressive campaign against the Prophet personally, and his mission and followers in general. This campaign had intensified following the double personal tragedy of 619 CE in which the Prophet had lost his wife Khadija, who had been to him a pillar of personal support and strength, and his uncle Abu Talib, his guardian and protector. This tragedy greatly restricted Muhammad's movement and his followers' activities in and around Makkah.

While the conflict between Muhammad and his tribal cousins, led by Abu Lahab, Amr ibn Hisham and Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, reached a stalemate within Makkah, his message was gaining converts and supporters outside it. The majority of provincial Arabs, however, elected to watch from a distance what they viewed as a purely internal dispute over power within the Quraysh. It would not do for them to become embroiled in supporting the religion of a the human being whose own tribe had denounced him, especially since that tribe held the custodianship of the sacred Kabah and assumed supreme religious authority for the whole of Arabia.

The Prophet had to seek an alternative home for his new faith, and a base where he could be protected, so that he could break the deadlock he had reached in Makkah, and be allowed to pursue his commission unimpeded. This, in my view, was the first and most important reason for leaving Makkah.

Before Madinah, other destinations had been proposed and tried as alternatives to Makkah. In 615, only a few years after Muhammad's call to prophethood in 610 CE, a number of early Muslims

had emigrated to Abyssinia. It would not be correct to say that they had gone there for reasons of personal safety alone. Had this been the case, the emigrants would have included the weakest and least supported elements among the Muslims. These were the ones at the receiving end of a sustained persecution campaign. But the reverse was the case. The emigrants included some of the most powerful of the Prophet's followers and tribesmen. The majority of them were from the tribe of Quraysh, including Jafar ibn Abu Talib, and a number of young men who were accustomed to providing protection to the Prophet, such as al-Zubayr ibn al- Awwam, Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, Abu Salamah al Makhzumi, Uthman ibn Affan, to mention but a few. There were women belonging to some of the most prominent families of the Quraysh, such as Umm al-Abubah, daughter of Abu Sufyan, the Quraysh's unrivalled non-Muslim leader. Such women would never be persecuted in Makkah.

There were, no doubt, other reasons for the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia. There was the need to shake the religious and social foundations of the Quraysh's most noble and powerful families. There could be no greater insult or threat to the Quraysh dynasties than seeing their proudest and most noble sons and daughters running away for conscientious and religious reasons, leaving their cultural heritage and tribal homeland behind.

Whatever other reasons there might have been for the Muslims' emigration to Abyssinia, the fact remains that the search had started very early on for a safe haven for the Quranic message, or a secure base where it could flourish and spread freely. This is further supported by reports of the Negus of Abyssinia's conversion to the Quranic message, which only the threatened rebellion of his patriarchs prevented him from making public, as some reliable accounts confirm.

Following the death of his uncle, Abu Talib, in 619 CE and as a result of the Quraysh's growing hostility, the Prophet sought help from the Thaqif tribe who lived in the town of Juif, some 90 km east of Makkah. The effort ended in failure because the Thaqif gave him a most hostile reception. They mocked him and heaped scorn on him. They let loose their louts and their children to chase him and throw stones at him, causing his feet to bleed.

### A Major Breakthrough

Not long after that, the fortunes of the Prophet and Islam suddenly changed for the better. At a place called Aqaba near Makkah, the Prophet had two crucial historic meetings in 621 and 622 CE with a group of Arabs from Madinah, during which they pledged their al-

legiance and support. This was to have a profound and far-reaching effect on the whole future of Islam and the Muslim community.

Towards the end of the Makkan period, the Prophet Muhammad embarked on a concerted effort of making contact with various influential Arab communities and tribes to introduce the Quranic message to them and seek their following and support.

The Khazraj and the Aws, the two Arab tribes of Madinah, having lived side by side with the Jews, had often heard them boast about: the Prophet who will come soon and: whose day is at hand, who would lead the Jews to victory over the Arabs. A group of the Khazraj pilgrims met the Prophet who explained to them his message. They immediately realized that he was the very Prophet the Jews were talking about. They were determined to get to him before the Jews did. Having met him and listened to what he had to say, they accepted him and became Muslims. They said to him: We have left our people in an unprecedented state of mutual hostility. May God make you the cause of their unity. On their return home, they reported what they did to their people who approved their action.

The following year a delegation comprising members of the two tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj, arrived in Makkah to meet the Prophet. They declared their acceptance of the Quranic message and their allegiance. He sent them back with one of his senior companions to teach them the Quran and instruct them in their new religion. At the following annual pilgrimage, a larger group from both tribes came to Makkah, and offered to make a covenant with the Prophet Muhammad. This was attended by his then non-Muslim uncle al-Abbas. The covenant bound them to support Muhammad and defend him as they would their own families and property. This is known as the Second Pledge of Aqaba.

Abd Allah ibn Rawaah of the Madinah people is reported to have stood up and asked the Prophet to: put forward your Lord's and your own conditions. Muhammad replied: My Lord's condition is that you worship Him alone and take no other gods beside Him. As for myself, my condition is that you give me the protection you would give yourselves and your property. Abd Allah asked: What do we receive in return? Paradise! the Prophet replied. They said: This is a profitable deal on which none will go back.

Thus the Arabs of Madinah committed themselves to the Quranic message and to following Muhammad and defending him. The Quranic message was to spread rapidly and entrench itself among them. The Muslims of Makkah began to arrive in Madinah in droves, abandoning their belongings and material possessions and taking only their faith. They were warmly welcomed by their fellow

Muslims, who offered to share with them everything they had.

Eventually the time came for the Prophet himself to migrate to Madinah. He was made aware of the plot of the ungrateful Quraysh to kill him. He asked his cousin, Ali ibn Abi Talib, to sleep in his bed so that he could escape. He and his close companion, Abu Bakr, then slipped away from Makkah. At last Muhammad had found the safe haven he had been looking for all those years, where he and his followers would be free to proclaim the faith and establish their community. The Prophet's arrival in Madinah was to prove a crucial turning point in the history of the Quranic message.

### The Making of a Unique Community

The community taking shape in Madinah was a unique and distinguished one, praised repeatedly throughout the Quran. This Chapter opens with a concise, generally applicable, definition of true believers. Nevertheless, it refers specifically to those early pioneers of the Quranic message: (2:1-2:5)

In contrast, we are immediately given a description of the ungrateful, which is again general and universal but applies specifically to those who rejected the Quranic message and opposed it, in and around both Makkah and Madinah: (2:6-2:7)

In Madinah, a third group emerged, the hypocrites, or *al-munafiqun*. This faction had not been noticeable in Makkah; its rise was prompted by the Prophet's arrival and settlement in Madinah, as outlined earlier. That was because in Makkah, Islam had no sovereign political entity or force, and the Muslims remained soft targets for persecution and repression by the rest of the Arabs. Those who accepted the Quranic message had to be brave and sincere, prepared to endure all kinds of hardship and terror.

The leadership of the Messenger of the Madinah tribes caused some people, including a number of leading and privileged figures, to feign acceptance of the Quranic message merely to save their position and protect their social and tribal status and interests. Thus they came to be known as the 'hypocrites' in Islamic terminology. One of the most prominent of these was Abd Allah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul who, prior to the Prophet's arrival in Madinah, was about to be crowned as a king of the city. At the beginning of the Chapter, we find a detailed description of the hypocrites (2:8-2:20) from which it can easily be seen that they included those who had reluctantly embraced the Quranic message and had not totally relinquished their self-pride and arrogance.

## THE CHAPTER'S CENTRAL THEME

Having introduced the three main types of humanity: believers, ungrateful and hypocrites, and having made a clear though implicit reference to the 'evil ones', the Chapter addresses humanity as a whole, asking them to worship the One God and fully acknowledge the revelations He has bestowed on His Messenger. It affirms God's favor and wisdom in creating the earth and the heavens, and all that is in them, for the use and benefit of the human being. (2:21-2:29)

This is followed by an account of the occasion when God appointed the human being as His vicegerent and representative on earth, outlining the terms and conditions of that auspicious appointment. (2:30-2:39)

The Chapter addresses the Muslims instructing them how to fulfil their role as guardians and carriers of God's Message to humanity. It offers guidance on the beliefs and concepts that were to distinguish the Muslim faith and way of life for all time to come. This part begins by defining the *qibla*, the direction to which Muslims should turn when offering formal prayers. It was to be the sacred site at Makkah housing the Kabah, the House of God built by Abraham and Ishmael, its first keepers and custodians. The Chapter tells us that even while the Muslims had been praying towards Jerusalem, the center of Judaism, Muhammad was privately yearning for the Kabah to become the exclusive direction for the Muslims during formal or obligatory prayer. (2:144)

The Chapter goes on to outline the principles and systems of the Quranic message in several fields including faith and outlook, rites of worship and religious matters, personal and public behavior and conduct. It teaches the Muslims that those who give their lives for the cause of God never die; that insecurity, hunger and poverty are not necessarily evil in themselves, but are means to test the believers, to assess their potential and refine and strengthen their capacity to advance God's cause in the world. It reassures Muslims that God is their patron and will always be on their side, while their detractors and opponents will be led astray into a wilderness of darkness by impostors, false mentors and bogus leaders. The Chapter outlines aspects of lawful and unlawful food and drink, penal measures, rules governing wills, fasting, war, and pilgrimage. It dwells at length on the regulation and organization of family affairs, including marriage and divorce, and covers rules governing spending, usury, lending and trade.

The main body of the second part deals basically with the structure and organization of the Muslim community, and the essential features and qualifications it requires to uphold God's message and

fulfil its prime role as His trustee and the custodian of His message for all time to come. The following section of the Chapter is almost entirely devoted to the education, formation and building of the Muslim community, which was destined to take up the task of expounding God's message to the rest of humanity. We continue, from time to time, to come across discourses and arguments dealing with those opposed to the Quranic message. There are also instructions to the Muslims on how to fight back and what precautions to take in order to avoid their traps.

Nevertheless, the chief concern of this section, and of the rest of the Chapter, remains the establishment and codification of the distinguishing qualities and features of the Muslim community. It is a community that has its own laws, confirming and succeeding those of earlier divine revelation, its own *qibla*, and above all its distinct and original outlook on the world and life as a whole. It is a community that is fully cognizant of its relationship with God and of its leading role in the world, and the responsibilities and obligations stemming from that role. It is a community that is confidently and loyally poised to submit fully to God's will and command, as ordained and articulated in the Quran and the teachings and work of the Prophet Muhammad.

We learn that the *qibla* issue is related to the fact that the Muslim community is a moderate and middle-of-the-road community. By virtue of their message and role in the world, Muslims shall be God's witness to the rest of humanity, while Muhammad shall be a witness to them. The Quran accords the Muslims a leading status in the world, and calls on them to work hard, persevere and make all the sacrifices that are required of them to earn that status and fulfil their role, putting their trust fully in God's will and wisdom. We come across some important elaboration of basic Islamic concepts such as *taqwa*, God-consciousness, and good works.

The Chapter then turns to setting out rules and regulations for the religious and practical life of the community. These include penalties for capital offenses and rules relating to wills, fasting during the month of Ramadan, going to war during the sacred months and within the surrounds of the Kabah, the Hajj, or Pilgrimage, drinking and gambling, and family affairs. The common denominator underpinning all these duties and regulations is sound belief and strong faith in God Almighty.

The Chapter has given us a good idea of the nature of the battle the Quran was fighting and the environment it was fighting in while it was being revealed, and the objectives it was aiming to achieve in raising and building the Muslim community in the 7th century CE.

The atmosphere among the Makkan Arabs was one of intrigue, mischief, confusion and falsehood. Human weakness and greed also had to be taken into account.

Above all, the Quran was aiming to establish and articulate upright concepts and sound principles on which the community could be raised, and to chart for it a course for a righteous and dignified leadership of the world. The enduring qualities of the Quran are vindicated by the fact that the principles, rules and instructions it propounded fourteen centuries ago remain today, and for all time to come, essential for the regeneration and reconstruction of Muslim society. The battles and the issues and the controversies remain the same. The enemies, and the means and weapons used against the Quran and its followers also remain fundamentally the same. To fight and win today's battles, Muslims will need to follow the Quranic principles and teachings which shaped and guided that pioneering Muslim community of Madinah.

Muslims today need the Quran for a better and a more realistic understanding of the world and their role in it. No other source exists that can provide them with the inspiration, the practical guidance and the complete way of life they need to forge ahead and assume the leadership of the world again.

The closing two signs take us full circle to the opening of the Chapter, affirming the Muslim world community's eternal belief in all Prophets and messages sent by God to humanity, without exception, and in what lies beyond the reach of human perception. They assert the Muslims' total unqualified faith in, and submission to, the One God. Thus, the ending of the Chapter coalesces smoothly with its beginning, as the subject matter is shaped to give a complete and superb example of the Quran's inimitable and powerful style.

## LESSON 87(1) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, ego-centric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their ego-centric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teaches how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions explicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change ego-centric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their ego-centric and socio-centric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or ego-centricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being socio-centric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Quranic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Quranic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people ego-centrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own ego-centric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's ego-centric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking ego-centrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has ego-centric, socio-centric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own ego-centric or socio-centric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be ego-centric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being ego-centric and socio-centric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH) SIGNS 2:1-2:7

**Madinah:** *Alif Lam Mim.* (2:1)
*That is the Book—there is no doubt in it,*
*a guidance for the ones who are God-conscious:* (2:2)

*Those who believe in the unseen* (2:3)
*and perform the formal prayer, and they spend*
*out of what We provided them,*
*and those who believe in what was caused to descend to you,*
*and what was caused to descend before you, and they are certain*
*of the world to come.* (2:4)
*Those are on a guidance from their Lord*
*and those, they are the ones who prosper.* (2:5)
*Truly, as for those who were ungrateful, it is the same to them*
*whether you had warned them or you have warned them not.*
*They believe not.* (2:6)
*God sealed over their hearts and over their inner hearing*
*and a blindfold over their inner sight.*
*And there is a tremendous punishment for them.* (2:7)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter opens with three Arabic letters: *Alif, Lam, Mim.* (2:1) This is immediately followed by the statement: (2:2)

Several Chapters in the Quran begin with a combination of Arabic letters in this way, and interpretations of these abstract openings vary quite widely. The one we tend to favor is that these are meant to emphasize the fact that the Quran is a book composed of the letters of the Arabic language, in the same way as they are used by the Arabs who were the first people addressed by this divine revelation.

The key word in this statement is 'guidance'. It expresses the essence and the nature of the Quran. But guidance for whom? Who are the people who will find that this Book provides them with light, direction and true counsel? They are the God-conscious. Once a person's heart is filled with God-consciousness (*taqwa*), he will benefit by the Quran. Consciousness of God is the quality that opens one's mind to the true guidance contained in the Quran and allows it to have its proper effect on one's life. It is the factor that causes one's heart and mind to become sensitive and receptive to God's guidance and enables one to respond to His call and His instruction.

### BELIEVING IN THE IMPERCEPTIBLE

The Chapter then gives a description of those who are God-conscious. In doing so it presents the early model of believers in Madinah, which was also to be the universal one for all future generations of Muslims: (2:3-2:4)

The most essential quality of the God-conscious believers is their conscious, active moral unity that enriches their souls with profound belief in the imperceptible, or *ghayb*, dedication to their reli-

gious obligations, recognition of all God's Messengers, and unshakeable certainty in the hereafter. Such are the ingredients that make the Muslim faith a complete whole and distinguishes believers from unbelievers. Such a thorough outlook is worthy of God's final message to humanity, which was intended as a focus and a guide for all human endeavor on this earth.

The limits of human perception do not prevent believers' souls from reaching their Creator, the omnipotent power behind the universe and all existence. (2:3) Their limited natural senses do not stand in the way of their desire to reach beyond the physical world or their pursuit of the ultimate truths of life.

This implies the believers' recognition that what they own and possess is a gift and a favor from God. (2:3) It is not of their own making. Such a belief brings mercy and benevolence towards the weak and the poor, and mutual fellowship and a true spirit of brotherhood and human community among all. The outcome is to eliminate greed and fill people's hearts with compassion and humanity, making life an opportunity for cooperation rather than an arena for conflict and confrontation. The sick, the weak and the young and helpless in society are given security, so that they feel they are living among human beings with compassionate hearts and scrupulous souls, rather than selfish beasts with nothing but claws and teeth.

This kind of benevolent spending comprises the obligatory purifying alms (*zakat*), as well as the giving of alms, voluntary donations and all other forms of charitable offerings. The latter had been instituted in Islam long before purifying alms, because they are more general and wide-ranging than purifying alms, which relates to the obligatory aspect of charitable spending.

This is a characteristic of the Muslim community, or *umma*, the rightful heir to, and custodian of, God's message and the legacy of all Prophets since the dawn of human life, and the leader of humanity. (2:4) This characteristic embodies such concepts as the unity of the human being, the oneness of God, the unity of the divine faith and God's Messengers. It purges people;s soul of bigotry and petty fanaticism. It reassures us of God's everlasting grace and protection which He has shown by sending successive Messengers preaching one and the same faith and offering the same guidance to all humanity. It allows us to feel proud of being the recipients of God's pure and universal guidance, which remains a bright shining star that is never extinguished, even in the darkest days of human history.

This characteristic (2:4) of the God-conscious links the present life with the life to come; the beginning with the end; deed with reward. It provokes in human beings the feeling that they are no mere

useless being, created without a purpose and left to wither away. It comforts them by affirming that full justice is certain to come, and thus inspires them to seek to do good, with total confidence in God's justice and mercy.

The passage aptly concludes with the comment: (2:5) Indeed, they adhered to God's guidance and they were successful. For those who wish to follow in their footsteps, the route remains clearly marked.

### A CONTRASTING PICTURE

The next human model we are presented with is that of the ungrateful. (2:6-2:7) The contrast with the previous group is total. While God's Book in itself is a guide for the God-conscious, no warning to the ungrateful has any effect at all. The receptivity of the believer contrasts with the ungrateful's total unreceptivity; here the ties that bind the believer to God and the world around, and link the seen with the unseen and the overt with the covert, are completely absent. Their hearts are firmly shut and their ears can hear nothing. They are utterly incapable of receiving guidance or discovering the truth. Moreover, (2:7) They are in total darkness, with no light to guide them anywhere. All this is their just reward for ignoring God's warnings.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN AND APPLY THEM TO THEIR LESSON 87(1)

**Outline**: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

**Prove**: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

**Relate**: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

**Review**: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

**State**: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

**Summarize**: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

**Trace**: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

**Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?**
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

**Questions to Generate Various Emotions•**
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

**Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•**
Why was he willing to do this? Was he scared?
What else did he feel that helped him ignore his fears?
Why? How did he look at things that helped him endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.
I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

## Lesson 87(2) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*) come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior.

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Signs 2:8-2:20

**Madinah:** *And among humanity are some who say:*
*We believed in God and in the Last Day,*
*and yet they are not ones who believe.* (2:8)
*They seek to trick God and those who believed*
*while they deceive none but themselves,*
*but they are not aware.* (2:9)
*In their hearts is a sickness.*
*Then, God increased them in sickness,*
*and for them is a painful punishment*
*because they had been lying against themselves.* (2:10)
*And when it was said to them not to make corruption*
*in and on the earth,*
*they said: Truly, we are only ones who make things right.* (2:11)
*No doubt they, they are the ones who make corruption*
*except they are not aware.* (2:12)
*And when it was said to them:*
*Believe as humanity believed, they said:*

*Will we believe as the fools believed?*
*No! Truly, they, they are the fools, except they know not.* (2:13)
*And when they met those who believed,*
*they said: We believed.*
*And when they went privately to their satans,*
*they said: Truly, we are with you.*
*We were only ones who ridicule.* (2:14)
*God ridicules them and causes them to increase*
*in their defiance, to wander unwilling to see.* (2:15)
*Those are those who bought fallacy for guidance,*
*so their trade was not bettered*
*nor had they been ones who are truly guided.* (2:16)
*Their parable is like a parable of those who started a fire.*
*Then, when it illuminated what was around it,*
*God took away their light and left them in shadows*
*where they perceive not.* (2:17)
*Unwilling to hear, unwilling to speak, unwilling to see,*
*then, they will not return to the way.* (2:18)
*Or as a cloudburst from heaven in which there are shadows*
*and thunder and lightning.*
*They lay their fingertips in their ears from the thunderbolt,*
*being fearful of death.*
*And God is One Who Encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:19)
*The lightning almost snatches their sight.*
*When it illuminated for them, they walked in the light.*
*And when it grew dark against them, they stood still.*
*And if God willed, He would have taken away*
*their having the ability to hear and their sight.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (2:20)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE MARK OF HYPOCRISY

We now move on to the third model. The picture that the sign paint of this type of people is neither as bright and noble as the first nor as dark and base as the second. It is an elusive, evanescent image, constantly changing. These are the hypocrites: (2:8-2:16)

This was a description of a number of people in Madinah, but the picture can be identified in every human generation. Such people are to be found among the elite of society who lack the moral courage to either openly accept the truth or clearly reject it. They are ever assuming the moral high ground, placing themselves above all others, deriding their understanding. We should, therefore, take these signs in their absolute sense, as being descriptive of hypocrites in all gen-

erations. They indeed address the human soul which is one in all societies.

Typically, the hypocrites claim belief in God and the Last Day when they in fact entertain no such belief. They simply do not possess the resolve to declare their true feelings and convictions. They delude themselves into thinking that they are so clever and cunning as to be able to deceive the 'naive' believers, but God uncovers the truth about their actions. They are trying to deceive not only believers, but God Himself: (2:9)

We find that (2:9) it mocks their behavior. They are so oblivious of the reality of their position, and so careless, that they deceive no one but themselves. God is aware of their schemes and deception. The believers are under God's protection. The thinking of these foolish hypocrites is so warped that they believe they have triumphed and achieved their goal, whereas in fact they have earned themselves nothing but doom and have condemned themselves to a terrible fate.

But why, we may ask: Do these hypocrites resort to such behavior? The answer is: (2:10) There is something wrong with their attitude and their hearts are not pure, which causes them to deviate and incur further displeasure from God, who has: (2:10) This type of sickness begins as a minor deviation and grows gradually, according to the established laws of human social and psychological behavior.

Predictably, such behavior will only lead to one end, as befits those who deceive God and the believers: (2:10) Other characteristics of the hypocrites, which were certainly evident in the case of those notorious ones encountered by the early Muslims at Madinah, such as Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, is obstinacy and justification of their corrupting behavior, together with an arrogant belief that they will escape punishment. (2:11-2:12) It is not sufficient for them simply to tell lies and resort to deception. They have to make false claims, adding insult to injury.

Hypocrites are also distinguished by their arrogance, their contempt for other people and their pretense to be what they are not. The description continues: (2:13)

It is clear that what the hypocrites of Madinah were being called on to demonstrate was sincere, unwavering faith, free of personal desire or caprice. They were being urged to join those who accepted Islam in its totality, submitted themselves completely to God, and opened their hearts and minds to the teachings and instructions of the Prophet Muhammad. But it is also clear that they were too proud to accept. They thought of Islam as a religion for the meek and the poor in society, which did not become the lofty elite. This was reflected in their response. They are quoted as saying: (2:13) Fools are

seldom aware of their predicament and are always willing to delude themselves that they are righteous and proper. Their lies and deceptions are compounded by treachery and murky scheming against the Muslims: (2:14)

To some people wickedness means strength and scheming is an art; yet the opposite is true. A strong person never feels the need to resort to treachery or intrigue. The hypocrites were too cowardly to come into the open and could only adopt a two-faced attitude. With the Muslims they professed belief in order to protect themselves and have access to the Muslim community and undermine it from within, but with their allies, they would say otherwise. Their rapport was matched by their cooperation in wicked schemes. As soon as this aspect of their conduct is revealed, God delivers the sternest warning of all: (2:15)

Here again we are faced with the timeless truth mentioned earlier: that God always takes care to defend the believers, reassuring them and thwarting their enemy, who will blunder arrogantly in the dark, deceived by God's temporary clemency and brief remission, towards their inevitable and dreadful fate. Then comes a final statement to sum up: (2:16) They spurned the opportunity to be rightly guided, and forfeited their right to it. They are left miserable and totally lost on all counts.

### THE ENEMY WITHIN

A detailed description of this third group suggests that the role played by the hypocrites in Madinah in undermining the Muslim community during those formative years was a very serious one, and that they instigated trouble and instability in that community. It is also an indication of how far-reaching a role hypocrites can play in any Muslim community, and that there is a need to expose their activities and maleficent scheming against the Muslims.

Further examples are given to add more clarification and expose the nature of hypocrisy: (2:17-2:18) Unlike the ungrateful, the hypocrites did not turn away from divine guidance in the first instance. They did not block their ears or refuse to listen or understand. They simply elected to turn away from God's guidance, after having considered and understood it. They sought the light and saw it, but they did not benefit from it. (2:17) This is a punishment for their deliberate rejection of God's guidance.

Human senses are meant to enable him to perceive and receive God's Guidance, but the hypocrites wilfully closed off their senses, rendering themselves deaf, dumb and blind. Thus they are no longer able to see the light, nor can they find the right path again. They are lost.

Another description of their wavering and loss of direction tells us that: (2:19-2:20) It is a fascinating scene, full of life and movement, overshadowed by confusion. It is remarkable for the sense of loss, panic and perplexity it conveys. There is light and sound, dark stormy clouds bringing heavy rain, intermittent spells of light and darkness. People walking in all directions, not knowing where to go, and stopping abruptly in terror as the light disappears, covering their ears against the piercing sound of thunder that could well-nigh kill them.

The interaction between the various dynamic elements of this awesome scene perfectly reflects the confused and perplexed state of mind of the hypocrites, their double-faced way of life and their wavering and equivocating attitude towards others. It is a vivid picture of the psychological condition of those people, eloquently expressed in the rich inimitable style of the Quran.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING YOUR FEELINGS

Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of your own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

### QUESTIONS

Does being "*unwilling to hear, unwilling to speak, unwilling to see*" (2:18) an example of someone who responds to a situation with their feelings or their thoughts?

Whenever you discuss someone's feelings in a classroom setting, you can consider what the person might be thinking to have that feeling in that situation:

Why does the "one who turns away" feel this way?
How is he interpreting his situation?
What led him to that conclusion?
Would you have felt the same if you had been in his circumstances?
Why or why not?
What accounts for the difference?
What could he have thought instead?
Then how might he have felt?

This strategy can be used in the service of developing a sense of justice and courage by exploring your thoughts that underlie your feelings. You can discuss the thoughts underlying passionate commitment to personal or social change.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to
understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to myself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through my own reasoning.

## LESSON 87(3) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and offers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## SIGNS 2:21-2:29

**Madinah:** *O humanity! Worship your Lord Who created you*
*and those who were before you*
*so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:21)
*It is He Who assigned the earth for you as a place of restfulness*
*and the heaven as a canopy. And He caused water to descend from*
*heaven and from it drove out fruit of trees as provision for you.*
*Then, assign not rivals to God while you, you know.* (2:22)
*And if you had been in doubt about what We sent down*
*to Our servant, then approach with a chapter of the Quran*
*—the like of it— and call to your witnesses other than God*
*if you had been ones who are sincere.* (2:23)
*And if you accomplish it not —and you will never accomplish it—*
*then be God-conscious of the fire whose fuel is humanity*
*and rocks, prepared for the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:24)
*And give good tidings to those who believed and did as the*
*ones in accord with morality, that for them will be Gardens*
*beneath which rivers run. Whenever they were provided from there*
*of its fruit as provision they would say:*
*This is what we were provided before.*
*And they will be brought it —ones that resemble one another—*
*and in it for them will be purified spouses.*
*And they are ones who will dwell in them forever!* (2:25)
*Truly, God is not ashamed that He propound a parable,*
*even of a gnat or whatever is above it.*
*So as for those who believed, then, they know that it is The Truth*
*from their Lord, but those who were ungrateful, then they will say:*
*What did God mean by this parable?*
*He causes many to go astray by it and He guides many by it.*
*And He causes none to go astray by it,*

*but the ones who disobey*— (2:26)
*those who break the compact of God after a solemn promise*
*and sever what God commanded that it be joined*
*and make corruption in and on the earth.*
*Those, they are the ones who are losers!* (2:27)
*How is it you are ungrateful to God? You had been lifeless,*
*then, He gave you life. again, He will cause you to die.*
*Again, He will give you life.*
*And, again, you are returned to Him.* (2:28)
*It is He Who created for you all that is in and on the earth.*
*Again, He turned His attention to the heaven. Then, He shaped*
*them into seven heavens. And He is Knowing of everything.* (2:29)

## COMMENTARY°

The call is addressed to all humanity to worship God, the sole Creator of all beings. He alone is the Creator, and He alone must be worshipped. Human beings' worship of God fulfils a definite purpose, namely, to make them be God-conscious. It is through worship that people can attain the honorable status of believing in and being conscious of none other than God. Thus, they fulfil their obligations towards the One God, Lord of the living and the dead, past and present, and the sole sustainer and provider of all that is in the heavens and the earth. (2:21-2:22)

The tone here (2:22) emphasizes the element of ease in human life. Planet earth has been prepared as a suitable place for living, providing comfortable shelter for the human being. Long familiarity, however, tends to make people take this ease and comfort for granted and to overlook the meticulous care and balance involved in providing the means to sustain human life on earth. Should only one of the elements necessary for life on this planet fail or run short, life itself would disappear or become impossibly hard.

*And the heavens a canopy* (2:22) solid and well coordinated. Human life on earth is strongly linked to the skies and what they provide: heat, light, gravity, stars and planets. The forces that preserve this delicate coherence and harmony between the earth and the rest of the universe are vital to enable and sustain human life. It is no surprise, therefore, that this should be mentioned within the context of God's power and grace, emphasizing human beings' duty to worship and submit to Him.

*He caused water to descend from heaven and from it drove out fruit trees as provision for you.* (2:22) This is a recurring theme in the Quran, especially in the context of reminding people of God's power and grace. Water is the essence of all life on earth. God says

elsewhere in the Quran: *We have made every living thing of water.* (21:30) Causing plants to grow, running into rivers, forming lakes, permeating the soil to form underground reservoirs then springing out or drilled up, water remains the most vital substance for life.

Water as a phenomenon, and its role on this earth, are wonders that no one can deny or overlook. To assert God's power and grace, it is sufficient simply to point them out as an example.

Two fundamental Quranic principles emerge from this passage. The first is God's Oneness as the Creator of all beings; the other is the unity of the universe and its internal cohesion, and its fitness for the human being and for all life. The earth is stretched out for our ease and comfort and the skies support their marvellous systems above us, while water brings forth crops and fruits to sustain humanity. All this is by the grace of God, the sole Creator: (2:22)

The concept of *s*etting up equals to God which the Quran frequently and strongly condemns need not necessarily refer to the worship of idols or figurines or statues, normally associated with pagan religious practice and observed by the Arab idolaters. It could very well take other forms, some of which are very subtle indeed. To pin one's hopes on anyone other than God, to fear someone other than Him, to believe that others can bring fortune or cause harm, are all infringements of monotheistic belief and, therefore, forms of idolatry or, to use Quranic terminology, *shirk*.

The early Muslims were extremely sensitive and alert to these subtle forms of idolatry. We today have to reflect on our own attitude towards this matter and determine how true and faithful we are to the pure and fundamental principle of God's Oneness.

### A DIVINE CHALLENGE

There were those in Madinah who used to raise doubts about the truth of the Prophet Muhammad's message, while the hypocrites, like the idol worshipping Arabs of Makkah, were sceptical and called it into question. Therefore we find the Quran challenging them all, as indeed it challenges humanity in general, saying: (2:23)

The challenge starts off with emphasizing an important fact by describing the Prophet Muhammad as God's 'servant'. This description is significant in a number of ways: it is, first, an honor to the Prophet himself and an indication that to be a 'servant' of God is the highest honor a human being can attain. Second, it affirms the essence of servitude to God in the universal human context, calling on all people to submit only to God and renounce all partners that may be associated with Him. The Prophet Muhammad, who attained the highest position of honor as a recipient of divine revelations, is

also honored by being described as a servant of God. The challenge is also related to the opening of this Chapter, which points out that the Quran was composed of the very same letters the Arabs were familiar with in their language. If they were in any doubt as to its truth or veracity, they were free to produce anything, even one Chapter, comparable to it, and they could call any witnesses they wished to testify in their favor. The Prophet's claim had already been supported by God.

This challenge remained open throughout the Prophet's life, and has done so ever since. The Quranic argument stands just as firmly today as it has through the centuries. The Quran remains today the unique work it was on the first day it was revealed, clearly distinguished from anything a person can ever produce. Thus, God's words, and His warning, remain true: (2:24)

In total contrast, we are given the scene of bliss which awaits the believers: (2:25) The interesting aspect of this life of eternal bliss, besides the chaste, pure spouses, is the similar types of fruit offered to the believers, which they somehow feel they were given previously, either in this world or in heaven. This apparent similarity seems to introduce an element of recurring surprise; every time the fruits are found to be different, adding to an atmosphere already filled with pleasure, abundance and enjoyment.

### THE USE OF PARABLES IN THE QURAN

At this point the Chapter speaks of the Quranic use of parables: (2:26-2:27) Earlier in the Chapter, the hypocrites were shown in derogatory situations. They also realized that the Quran uses parables referring to insignificant creatures. One of these compares unbelievers to spiders: *The parable of those who take other than God to themselves as protectors is that of the spider who takes a house to itself. But truly the frailest of houses is the house of the spider if they had but known.* (29:41)

Similarly the Quran cites a parable showing the powerlessness of their false deities: *O humanity! A parable is propounded, so listen to it. Truly those whom you call to other than God will never create a fly, even though they be gathered together for it. And if the fly were to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly. Weak are the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought.* (22:73)

This passage suggests that the hypocrites in Madinah and the idol worshippers, were, in their clumsy and confused campaign against the Quranic message, trying to exploit such use of parables to raise doubts about the Quran's divine origins, claiming that God

would not speak about such insignificant creatures as spiders and flies. They thus hoped to undermine the authority and authenticity of the Quran. These signs serve to refute that argument and explain the wisdom underlying the use of such parables, while warning the ungrateful against taking up such a line of argument and reassuring believers that they will strengthen their faith.

God is the Lord of all creatures, big and small. (2:26) Every single creature, regardless of shape or size, is a marvel to behold, embodying the greatest secret of life, which is known only to God. Besides, parables are used to explain and illustrate concepts and ideas, and the size or shape of their subjects is irrelevant; in no case should they be slighted or scoffed at. Moreover, God, in His infinite wisdom, makes use of such parables to assess and test people's faith.

Parables are used by God to test people's faith: (2:26) In consequence of their attitudes and actions, the evildoers are given even more freedom to pursue the route they have chosen for themselves.

### GOD'S COVENANT WITH THE HUMAN BEING

We have not completely departed from the subject of the beginning of the Chapter: the presentation of the main types of people found in every human society. So the text turns to speak in more detail of the "evildoers": (2:27)

The 'covenant' (2:27) is in fact several covenants, the fundamental one being a person's obligation to acknowledge his Creator and turn to Him in worship and submission. Belief in God is a basic human need that must be fulfilled; but it can be abused and misdirected, so that a person sets up partners or equals to God and turns to them. There is the covenant made with Adam on behalf of all humanity, establishing the human being's role on earth and defining his rights and obligations, as we shall discuss presently.

There are numerous covenants and agreements, conveyed through Prophets and Messengers at different stages of human history, with various communities and human groups, committing them to the belief in the One God and implementation in their daily life of His laws and teachings. Evildoers, throughout history, have violated these covenants, and once they renege on their basic and fundamental obligations towards God, there is nothing to deter them from violating laws and norms of every kind, thereby wreaking havoc and destruction on all forms of life. (2:27) Such ties are also numerous, and include family ties between kindred and relations as well as humanitarian ties within the larger human family. First and foremost, God has enjoined the maintenance of a person's relationship with God and his fellow believers, which underpins all other ties and relation-

ships. When these ties are broken or dissolved, societies fall apart and chaos and corruption run rampant.

This corruption (2:27) also takes numerous forms and manifestations, but it stems from one major evil: deviation from God's word and violation of His covenant, severing the ties and relations He has commanded to be maintained. The root of all evil and corruption on earth is deviation from God's laws which He has laid down for the conduct and organization of human life. This is a departure that will surely lead to ruin and destruction. Human life cannot be built on sound and healthy foundations as long as God's laws, commands and teachings are discarded or ignored or given second place. Once this vital bond between God and the human being is broken, human and natural destruction becomes inevitable. Therefore, those who advocate such deviation from God's path and perpetrate corruption and ungodliness deserve to be left to stray and to be utterly confounded. Their confusion is caused by the same thing that provides guidance to those who are God-conscious.

### GIVING LIFE AFTER DEATH

The Chapter then addresses all humanity, denouncing their disbelief in God who gives life and takes it away, and who provides for all and has full control over the whole universe: (2:28-2:29) Denial or rejection of God after seeing all these manifest signs is certainly despicable and utterly unjustifiable.

The sign questions human denial of, and ingratitude to, God: (2:28) How impertinent of a person to reject God, the origin and the cause of life. If people would only reflect on how the human being came to be in the first instance, there would be no reason for bewilderment or rejection of life after death. (2:28) As it was from Him you have come, to Him you shall return, in total fulfilment of His will and purpose.

Thus, in one short sign, the whole book of life is opened and. closed. The whole story of human existence on this earth is reviewed. It begins, by the will of God, with a state of death and ends with death, after which God will restore life again, and the ultimate return thereafter shall be to Him from whom life originated. In this brief picture, we can visualize God's awesome power and appreciate its deep impact on our hearts and minds. This is complemented by another powerful affirmation: (2:29)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### Questions

The following questions may help you in understanding intellectual curiosity.

What is it to look at things Quranically?
You seem to be approaching this issue from x perspective.
Why have you chosen this rather than that perspective?
How would other groups/types of people respond? Why?

What is a parable? Does a parable—or word pictures—help to develop intellectual curiosity? Discuss signs 2:26-2:27, 29:41 and 22:73 in answering this question.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I have understood the importance of Quranic parables.
As I further develop my intellectual curiosity, I hope to learn to use parables to illustrate a moral or spiritual lesson as these will help me re-discover what God is like and move my heart to respond to God's love and truth.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:30-2:39

**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:30)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:31)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:32)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:33)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:34)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:35)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:36)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:37)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:38)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Adam (2:39)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:40-2:46

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:40)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:41)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:42)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:43)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:44)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:45)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:46)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:47-2:59

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:47)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:48)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:49)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:50)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:51)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:53)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:54)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:55)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:56)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:57)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:58)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:59)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:60-2:61

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (2:60)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (2:61)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah) Signs 2:62-2:71

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:62)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:63)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:64)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:65)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:66)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:67)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:68)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:69)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:70)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:71)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Signs 2:72-2:82

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:72)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:73)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:74)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:75)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:76)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:77)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:78)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:79)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:80)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:81)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:82)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Signs 2:83-2:86

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:83)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:84)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:85)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:86)**

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Signs 2:87-2:96

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:87)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:88)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:89)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:90)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:91)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:92)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:93)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:94)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:95)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses and the Children of Jacob (2:96)**

## Lesson 87(4) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Generating Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective

One of the goals of the Quran is to encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Signs 2:97-2:103

**Madinah:** *Say: Whoever had been an enemy of Gabriel*
*knows then, truly, it was sent down through him to your heart with the*
*permission of God, that which establishes as true what was before it,*
*and as a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe.* (2:97)
*Whoever had been an enemy of God and His angels,*
*and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael,*
*then, truly, God is an enemy of the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:98)
*And, certainly, We caused to descend to you signs, clear portents.*
*And none are ungrateful for them, but the ones who disobey.* (2:99)
*Is it not that whenever they made a contract—a compact—*
*a group of people among them repudiated it?*
*Nay! Most of them believe not.* (2:100)
*And when a Messenger drew near them from God—*
*one who establishes as true what was with them—*
*a group of people repudiated among those who were given the Book,*
*the Book of God—behind their backs as if they had not been knowing*
*that it was God's Book.* (2:101)
*And they followed what the satans recount*
*during the dominion of Solomon.*
*And Solomon was not ungrateful, except the satans were ungrateful.*
*They teach humanity sorcery, and what was caused to descend to the*
*two angels at Babylon—Harut and Marut. But neither of these two*
*teach anyone unless they say: We are only a test, so be not ungrateful.*
*And they learn from these two*
*that by it they separate and divide between*
*a the human being and his spouse.*
*And they were not ones who injured anyone with it,*
*but by the permission of God.*

*And they learn what hurts them and profits them not.*
*And, certainly, they knew that whoever bought it,*
*for him in the world to come was not any apportionment.*
*And miserable was that for which they sold themselves.*
*Would that they had been knowing!* (2:102)
*And if they believed and were God-conscious,*
*certainly, their place of spiritual reward from God was better.*
*Would that they had been knowing!* (2:103)

## COMMENTARY°

### A STRANGE ENMITY TO AN ANGEL

The chapter goes on to direct Prophet Muhammad to proclaim more challenging truths: (2:97-2:98) The Quran was lodged in Muhammad's heart: (2:97) The Quran confirms and endorses in general terms all divine revelations received before it. The religion of God, as expounded and preached by all revealed Scriptures, is basically one and the same. All divine revelations have come as guidance to the human being and as a source of joyful tidings for all believing hearts that are receptive and willing to have faith in God.

The sign (2:98) insists that Prophets and angels should be equally respected and revered, and that whoever opposes or is hostile to any of them shall have God's power to contend with. (2:98)

### CASTING GOD'S REVELATIONS AWAY

The chapter then turns to reassure Prophet Muhammad of the truth and validity of the revelations he had received, and to denounce those who reject or oppose his message. It specifically condemns the Children of Jacob for not living up to their promises and commitments, whether made to God or to their own prophets, or to Muhammad himself. That is manifest in their rejection of the Quran, God's final revelation to humanity, which endorsed and reinforced the revelations they already had. (2:99-2:101)

### MAGIC AND PSYCHIC PHENOMENA

Would that be the end of their transgression? Would they, having rejected the revelations sent down to Muhammad, hold fast to the revelations given to their forefathers and show faith and loyalty to its laws and teachings? Definitely not. They cast God's revelations behind their backs and went in search of myths and superstitions: (2:102-2:103)

The chapter states clearly that what people learnt of practices that could bring discord between the human being and wife could only bring them harm: (2:102) Since this thing that they learnt is de-

scribed as disbelief in God, this is reason enough to make it pure evil that can bring no profit whatsoever. (2:102-2:103)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when students concern themselves with accuracy and truth. They should ask themselves:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand,?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

### QUESTIONS

Are the Quranic words clear? Do we have to analyze any concepts?
Do we know when the key Quranic words and phrases apply and don't apply?
Do we clearly understand how they apply to these signs?
Does this question ask something about facts?
About the meanings of words?
Are we evaluating anything?
What? Why? What criteria should we use in the evaluation?
What facts are relevant?
How can we get the evidence we need?

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following:

I am clear about what precisely the purpose of these signs that I am evaluating are when the Quran says: *Would that they had been knowing?* (2:102, 2:103)
Given the Quranic purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?

## LESSON 87(5) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:104-2:112

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Say not: Look at us* (raina), *but say:*
*Wait for us patiently* (unzurna) *and hear.*
*And for the ones who are ungrateful,*
*there is a painful punishment.* (2:104)
*Neither wish those who were ungrateful*
*from among the People of the Book,*
*nor the ones who are idol worshippers*
*that any good be sent down to you from your Lord.*
*And God singles out for His mercy whom He wills.*
*And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace.* (2:105)
*For whatever sign We nullify or cause it to be forgotten,*
*We bring better than it, or similar to it.*
*Have **you** not known*
*that God is Powerful over everything?* (2:106)
*Have **you** not known that God,*
*to Him is the dominion of the heavens and the earth,*
*and not for you other than God is there*
*either a protector or a helper?* (2:107)
*Or want you that you ask your Messenger*
*as Moses was asked before?*
*And whoever takes disbelief in exchange for belief,*
*then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* (2:108)
*Many of the People of the Book wished that after your belief*
*they return you to being one who is ungrateful out of jealousy*
*within themselves even after The Truth became clear to them.*
*So pardon and overlook until God brings His command.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (2:109)
*And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms.*
*And whatever good you put forward for yourselves,*

*you will find it with God.*
*Truly, God is Seeing of what you do.* (2:110)
*And they said: None will enter the Garden,*
*but ones who had been Jews or Christians.*
*That is their own fantasies.*
*Say: Prepare your proof*
*if you had been ones who are sincere.* (2:111)
*Yea! Whoever submitted his face to God,*
*and he is one who is a doer of good,*
*then, for him his compensation is with his Lord.*
*And there will be neither fear in them,*
*nor will they feel remorse.* (2:212)

## COMMENTARY°

### BEGRUDGING GOD'S GRACE

The opening signs of this passage (2:104-2:110) address the believers, asking them not to emulate the Jews in their play on certain Arabic words when speaking to the Prophet. One such word is *raina*, which means: "listen to us, *look at us*, would that you never hear; but the sound of which could be subtly varied to convey an offensive meaning, but say *unurna*, "*wait for us patiently*, or please speak to us slowly so we understand or bear with us." The Muslims were advised to use synonymous words that could not be twisted to give an offensive meaning in their address to the Prophet.

The section emphasizes that God's decisions in these matters are not arbitrary. If He chooses to bestow His mercy on Muhammad and his followers, it is because He knows that they both deserve and are worthy of it: (2:105).

Regardless of the immediate occasion, the Chapter at this point gives a definitive statement with regard to this important issue: (2:106)

Partial amendments of rulings in response to changing circumstances during the lifetime of Prophet Muhammad could only be in the interest of humanity as a whole. As the originator of revelations, God, the Creator, is the final and absolute authority to decide such amendments. To cancel or replace any directive or principle is His exclusive prerogative. This point is emphasized in the next sign: (2:107)

We can clearly detect a hint of warning, and a reminder to Muslims that other than God they can call on no one for support or protection. The likely reason for this is the effect the Jewish campaign had had on some Muslims, whose trust and confidence in the Prophet showed signs of flagging. That is borne out by the following sign: (2:108)

Again there is a clear denunciation of the habit of questioning the Prophets: (2:109) That enmity towards the Quranic message which filled, and continues to fill, the hearts of some has always been the real force that motivates their plotting and scheming. (2:109)

Muslims are urged to pursue the faith God has chosen for them and to invest their efforts and energies in the worship of God Almighty: (2:110)

Thus we can see how the Quran revitalizes the collective Muslim conscience, focuses on the real sources of danger to the community, and mobilizes Muslims' energy and feelings for closer contact with God and more gracious submission to His will and command. Until that will is revealed and God's word takes effect in life, Muslims are urged to exercise prudence and show tolerance and magnanimity towards detractors, envious people and ill-wishers.

### CLAIMS WITHOUT BASIS

The Chapter then deals with some general claims made by Jews and Christians, to the effect that they are the only righteous people who are assured of being admitted to heaven in the life to come. At the same time they continue to denounce and throw charges at each other. It then goes on to give God's final word on the matter. (2:111-113)

The Chapter then establishes another fundamental Quranic principle: that reward is commensurate with deed, without any preference for one nation, group or individual over another. Faith and submission to God, rather than title, ancestry or name, is the determining factor in this regard: (2:112)

Here again we find the most important feature of the Islamic faith: total, unconditional, mental and physical surrender to God. It is, however, a surrender that must be manifested in a practical form, expressed in the sign: (2:112)

The Chapter notes several accusations and controversies but leaves the final judgement to God, who on the Day of Judgement shall judge between them on all their disputes. It is to Him that all matters are ultimately referred. This is the fairest and most satisfactory way of dealing with these irrational and futile arguments, which were made by people whose exclusive claim to salvation and guidance has already been refuted.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts**

(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

The following questions may help you in clarifying issues or conclusions.

Are the conclusions of these signs clear?
What would someone who disagreed with them do?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

The commentary on (2:104) clarified the conclusion of that sign so that I clearly understood it.
I was able to clarify issues and conclusions in these Quranic signs by active reading, writing, speaking and listening.

## Lesson 87(6) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Clarifying and Analyzing the Meanings of Words or Phrases

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38: 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:113-2:121

**Madinah:** *And the Jews said:*
*The Christians are not based on anything.*
*And the Christians said:*
*The Jews are not based on anything,*
*although they both recount the Book.*
*Thus, said those who know not a thing like their saying.*
*So God will give judgment between them on the Day of Resurrection*
*about what they had been at variance in it.* (2:113)
*And who does greater wrong than those who prevented*
*access to the places of prostration to God so that His Name*
*not be remembered in them,*
*and endeavored for their devastation?*
*It had not been for those to enter them,*

*but as ones who are fearful.*
*For them is degradation in the present,*
*and for them is a tremendous punishment*
*in the world to come.* (2:114)
*And to God belongs the East and the West.*
*So wherever you turn to, then, again,*
*there is the Countenance of God.*
*Truly, God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (2:115)
*And they said: God took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him!*
*Nay! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.*
*All are ones who are morally obligated to Him,* (2:116)
*Beginner of the heavens and the earth*
*and when He decreed a command,*
*then, truly, He says to it: Be!* (kun) *Then, it is!* (2:117)
*And those who know not said:*
*Why does God not speak to us or a sign approach us?*
*Thus, said those who were before them like their saying.*
*Their hearts resembled one another.*
*Surely, We made manifest*
*the signs for a folk who are certain.* (2:118)
*Truly, We sent* ***you*** *with The Truth as a bearer of good tidings*
*and as a warner. And* ***you*** *will not be asked*
*about the Companions of Hellfire.* (2:119)
*The Jews will never be well-pleased with* ***you,***
*nor the Christians until* ***you*** *have followed their creed.*
*Say: Truly, guidance of God. It is the guidance.*
*And if* ***you*** *had followed their desires after what drew near* ***you***
*of the knowledge, there is not for* ***you*** *from God*
*either a protector or a helper.* (2:120)
*Those to whom We gave the Book recount it with a true recounting.*
*Those believe in it, and whoever is ungrateful for it,*
*Then, those, they are the ones who are losers.* (2:121)

## Commentary°

The two signs (2:214-2:215) were revealed in connection with the *qibla* issue is the sign that comes immediately after them, stating: (2:115) It is saying that in the final analysis formal prayer is valid whatever direction a worshipper faces, because God's Countenance will be there. To specify a particular direction is no more than a matter of discipline. It does not mean that God's Countenance is found in one direction rather than another. After all, God does not wish to make things difficult for people, nor would He want to take away their reward or devalue it: (2:115)

### UNBELIEF IS ALL ONE

The Chapter then discusses certain distorted concepts of God. It highlights the contrast between those and the beliefs held by the pagan Arabs, emphasizing the striking similarities, before it corrects those erroneous concepts and presents the true unitarian belief of the Quranic message. (2:116-2:118)

Next we come to the pure and clear Quranic concept of the nature of God and His relationship with His creation, and how creatures come into being. This is the clearest and noblest understanding of all these facts: (2:116-2:117)

This plain concept (2:116) eliminates the need for the Creator to have offspring or have them ascribed to Him, since: (2:117) How this divine will operates cannot be known because it is beyond the human being's capacity to comprehend, and it would be futile for him to try or pretend to know.

Following this brief discussion, the Chapter cites another statement it attributes to the idolaters of Arabia, again having a strange resemblance to what the Jews and the Christians were saying: (2:118)

It is a stern, uncompromising warning (2:120), addressed to none other than Muhammad, God's Messenger and beloved Prophet. His detractors are motivated by prejudice and narrow-minded self-interest, rather than by lack of proof or knowledge. Those of them who are able to rid themselves of such motives and who properly understand their own Scriptures will believe him: (2:121)

Having delivered this decisive warning, the Chapter now addresses the Children of Jacob with an amicable and sympathetic appeal, as a fitting end to this extensive debate concerning their history and religious conduct. They are offered a last chance before they are totally discredited and deprived of the privilege and honor of being the trustees and custodians of God's message to humanity.

The appeal opens with similar words as used earlier: (2:122-123)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### EXAMINE IN DEPTH

The sacred text should be examined in depth when we want to clarify or analyze the Quranic word *ayah*.

Why does the sacred text tell you about the importance of a sign when it says: 41:53

Why does the Quranic message think this concept is worth knowing?

Does this mean that the 6600 some signs of the Quran are also signs of God;d creation in the same way that a tree is a sign: Or the planets and stars: Or a gnat, a fly, a spider, or a bee: Or we ourselves as human beings?

### 8 STAGES OF WRITING

**1. Diagram**: For a question which specifies a diagram you should present a drawing, chart, plan, or graphic representation in your answer. Generally you are expected to label the diagram and in some cases add a brief explanation or description.

**2. Discuss**: The term discuss, which appears often in essay questions, directs you to examine, analyze carefully, and present considerations pro and con regarding the problems or items involved. This type of question calls for a complete and entailed answer.

**3. Enumerate**: The word enumerate specifies a list or outline form of reply. In such questions you should recount, one by one, in concise form, the points required.

**4. Evaluate**: In an evaluation question you are expected to present a careful appraisal of the problem stressing both advantages and limitations. Evaluation implies authoritative and, to a lesser degree, personal appraisal of both contributions and limitations.

**5. Explain**: In explanatory answers it is imperative that you clarify and interpret the material you present. In such an answer it is best to state the how or why, reconcile any differences in opinion or experimental results, and, where possible, state causes. The aim is to make plain the conditions which give rise to whatever you are examining.

**6. Illustrate**: A question which asks you to illustrate usually requires you to explain or clarify your answer to the problem by presenting a figure, picture, diagram, or concrete example.

**7. Interpret**: An interpretation question is similar to one requiring explanation. You are expected to translate, exemplify, solve, or comment upon the subject and usually to give your judgment or reaction to the problem.

**8. Justify**: When you are instructed to justify your answer, you must prove or show grounds for decisions. In such an answer, evidence should be presented in convincing form.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

## LESSON 87(7) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

### QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to learn lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

*ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:122-2:129

**Madinah:** *O Children of Jacob!*
*Remember My divine blessing with which I was gracious to you,*
*and that I gave you an advantage over the worlds.* (2:122)
*And be God-conscious of a Day when no soul*
*will give recompense for another soul at all,*
*nor will the equivalent be accepted from it,*
*nor will intercession profit it , nor will they be helped.* (2:123)
*And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words;*
*then, he fulfilled them.*
*God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes* ***you*** *a leader for humanity.*
*He said: And of my offspring?*
*He said: Attain not My compact the ones who are unjust.* (2:124)
*And mention when We made the House*
*a place of spiritual reward for humanity and a place of sanctuary:*
*And take the Station of Abraham to yourselves as a place of prayer.*
*And We made a compact with Abraham, and Ishmael*
*saying that: Purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it,*
*and the ones who cleave to it, and the ones who bow down,*
*and the ones who prostrate themselves.* (2:125)
*And mention when Abraham said: My Lord! Make this a safe land,*
*and provide its people with fruits,*
*whomever of them believed in God and the Last Day.*
*God said: And whoever is ungrateful, I will give him enjoyment for*
*awhile. Again, I will compel him to the punishment of the fire.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (2:126)
*And mention when Abraham elevates the foundations of the House*
*with Ishmael saying: Our Lord! Receive it from us.*
*Truly,* ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Hearing, The Knowing.* (2:127)
*Our Lord! And make us ones who submit to* ***You****,*
*and, of our offspring, a community of ones who submit to* ***You.***
*And cause us to see our devotional acts, and turn to us in forgiveness.*
*Truly,* ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Accepter of Repentance,*
*The Compassionate.* (2:128)
*Our Lord! And raise* ***You*** *up, then, in the midst of them, a Messenger*
*from among them who will recount to them* ***Your*** *signs and teach them*
*the Book, and wisdom and make them pure.*
*Truly,* ***You****,* ***You*** *alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (2:129)

### Commentary°

#### Abraham's Covenant

When his Lord tested Abraham with certain commandments and

he fulfilled them, He said: (2:124) The Prophet is here reminded of how God had imparted certain commandments and obligations to Abraham in order to test his faith, loyalty and resolve. Elsewhere in the Quran, he is described as: *Abraham who paid his account in full.* (53:37) This is a recognition by God of Abraham's faithful and complete fulfilment of those obligations, according him a very high rank in God's estimation. Therefore, God's promise: *I am One who makes you a leader for humanity.* (2:124)

Thus, Abraham becomes the leader to be followed, the one who shows people the way to all goodness. Being human, Abraham is immediately prompted to wish for that blessing and privilege to be extended to his offspring. What Abraham expressed was a natural instinctive human reaction, because the human being is always eager to multiply and perpetuate his achievements and attainments. By the passing of knowledge and experience from one generation to the next, the human lot is improved and life is preserved. This natural and necessary human process has been a target for criticism and attack, while the Quranic message recognizes its importance, and promotes it through its law of inheritance, so that it serves human society to the full.

The answer to Abraham's question: *And what of my offspring?* reiterates an already stated major principle: that religious leadership and authority are granted purely on merit, in reward for sincere faith and diligent work. They are not inherited through ancestral lineage. God said: *"My compact does not extend to the ones who are unjust.* (2:124) *Unjust* takes various forms: it might be directed at oneself, by associating partners with God, or it might be oppression directed at fellow human beings. The leadership denied to wrongdoers includes all the meanings covered by the Arabic term *imam*, which include prophethood, political authority, and the leading of congregational prayers. Equity and justice make up the foremost qualification for this lofty vocation, and no one who deviates from these qualities deserves any form of leadership, in its widest sense.

The Sacred House, the Kabah, (2:125) was defiled by the ungrateful Arabs of the Quraysh who were supposed to be its trusted caretakers and custodians. They harassed and persecuted the believers and drove them out of Makkah. Yet God wanted this House to be a sanctuary to which people of all races resort. In there people should find peace and security for all. The Arabs had been directed to establish the place where Abraham stood, which is a reference to the whole area surrounding the Kabah, as a place for prayer, which makes its subsequent designation as a *qibla*, a spot towards which Muslims turn in prayer, a very natural progression raising no objec-

tions from anyone. After all, it had been the very first place to which Muslims, the legitimate heirs of Abraham's monotheistic religion, had turned in their prayer, because it had been dedicated to God and to no one else. Abraham and Ishmael, two pious and sincere servants of God, had been charged with cleansing it and preparing it for pilgrims who would come to it for worship and meditation. They would make no claim to its ownership, nor did they have it in their power to pass such ownership to anyone else. They were mere servants of God Almighty and keepers of His sacred and revered House. Abraham said: (2:126)

While still pleading for the House to be made a universal place of peace and security for posterity, Abraham has clearly heeded God's earlier admonition, as we now find him making the exception that only the believers should receive God's favor.

The chapter then goes on to paint a lively picture of Abraham and Ishmael embarking on the job of constructing the House of God and preparing it for worshippers: (2:127-2:129)

Their first aim is that their labor, which is dedicated purely to God, should be accepted by Him. Therefore, they offer it with humility, hoping to earn God's pleasure through it, pinning their hopes on the fact that God listens to their prayers and knows their feelings and intentions. (2:127)

They turn to God seeking His guidance, fully aware that, without His help and support, they are powerless. (2:128) Their prayer also shows the intrinsic solidarity of the community of believers over successive generations.

Their main concern was that their offspring should be God-conscious, righteous and obedient to God. So they add a specific request: (2:129)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DISCUSSION

Discuss with others the critical thinking strategy of thinking precisely about thinking in regard to: (2:123) when we fully recognize that each one of us is responsible for our own intentions and behavior.

Discuss the eight obstacles to being a Quranic critical thinker.

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or s some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 87(8) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, the Quranic message advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of Book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of Prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of *hikmah* in the Quran is underscored in one of its signs to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and **society.**[1]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:130-2:141

**Madinah:** *And who shrinks from the creed of Abraham,*
*but he who fooled himself?*
*And, certainly, We favored him in the present.*
*And, truly, in the world to come he will be*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (2:130)
*When his Lord said to him: Submit!*
*He said: I submitted to the Lord of the worlds.*(2:131)
*And Abraham charged his children to it, and Jacob: O my children!*
*Truly, God favored the way of life for you.*
*Then, be not overtaken by death*
*but you be ones who submit to the One God.*(2:132)
*Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob*
*when he said to his children: How will you worship after me?*
*They said: We will worship **your** God and the God of **your** fathers—*
*Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—*
*One God. And we are ones who submit to Him.*(2:133)
*That was, surely, a community that passed away.*

*For them is what they earned, and for you is what you earned*
*and you will not be asked about what they had been doing.*(2:134)
*And they said: Be you ones who are Jews or Christians,*
*you will be truly guided.*
*Say **you**: Nay! We follow the creed of Abraham a monotheist.*
*And he had not been of the ones who are idol worshippers.*(2:135)
*Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us,*
*and what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac*
*and Jacob and the Tribes and whatever was given Moses and Jesus,*
*and whatever was given to the Prophets from their Lord.*
*We separate and divide not between anyone of them.*
*And we are ones who submit to Him.*(2:136)
*So if they believed the like of what you believed in it,*
*then, surely, they were truly guided.*
*And if they turned away, then, they are not but in breach.*
*So God suffices for you against them.*
*And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.*(2:137)
*Life's color is from God. And who is fairer at coloring than God?*
*And we are ones who worship Him.*(2:138)
*Say: Argue you with us about God?*
*And He is our Lord and your Lord.*
*And to us are our actions, and to you are your actions.*
*And we are to Him ones who are sincere and devoted.* (2:139)
*Or say you about Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the*
*Tribes had been ones who are Jews or Christians?*
*Say: Are you greater in knowledge or God?*
*And who does greater wrong than he who had been*
*keeping back testimony from God that is with him,*
*and God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.* (2:140)
*That is a community that surely passed away;*
*for it is what it earned and for you is what you earned*
*and you will not be asked about what they had been doing.* (2:141)

## COMMENTARY°

There is a brief interjection condemning those who dispute Muhammad's role as a Prophet and Messenger and argue about the essence of divine faith: (2:130-2:132)

### A FAITH TO PASS TO YOUR CHILDREN

At this point we come to witness another awesome scene: Jacob on his deathbed, giving his last words of wisdom and advice to his children, gathered around him: (2:133)

It is indeed a tremendous and solemn occasion. The most im-

portant and only issue that concerned Jacob as he drew his last breath was the religion his children were to follow after his death. He was worried about the fate of his legacy and the future of the religion placed in his trust. His children's reply must have been most reassuring and gratifying for him. The chain would not be broken, and the legacy of Abraham was sure to live on for many generations to come.

Jacob asks his children: *How will you worship after me?* (2:133) He thus tells them why he gathered them, and the issue he wanted to be sure of before his death. It is the trust and the heritage of that blessed house. His children reassure Jacob that they would be true to their trust. Thus, the same heritage of Abraham was safe with Jacob's children, who clearly state that they have submitted themselves to God.

The sign opens with a rhetorical question addressed to the Jews: *Had you been witness when death attended Jacob?* (2:133) It tells them what went on as witnessed by God Himself. They could not question the truth of what had happened or distort it after God has stated what went on.

In the light of these assertions, a clear distinction is established between that bygone generation and the one that was facing the Quranic message in Madinah: (2:134)

The Prophet is instructed here to confront the Jews and the Christians together with the same challenge, and call upon them equally to revert, together with the Muslims, to the original religion of Abraham.

As this section makes its final, irrefutable argument, showing the great gulf separating Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and his sons from the Jews who were the Prophet's contemporaries, it repeats the sign with which it concluded its discourse about Abraham and his descendants who submitted themselves to God: (2:141) With this powerful statement, all arguments are brought to their decisive conclusion.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### Questions

Feel free to raise questions about passages you read.

What does one of the previous signs say?
What does it imply?
Assume? Explain it.
Does it contradict anything you know or suspect to be true?
How do you know?
How could you find out?
Does this fit in with your experience? In what way? Why or why not?
What might someone who disagreed with it say?
Does the text leave out relevant information?
Does it favor one perspective? Which?
Why do you suppose it was written this way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I feel free to raise questions about the meaning of the Quranic signs I read.
I can discuss my interpretations of what I read.

## Lesson 87(9) Critical Thinking Strategy

### Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)

### Quranic Signs 2:142-2:147

**Madinah:** *The fools among humanity say:*
*What turned them from their direction of formal prayer*
*to which they had been towards?*
*Say: To God belongs the East and the West.*
*He guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (2:142)
*And, thus, We made you a middle community*
*that you be witnesses to humanity,*
*and that the Messenger be a witness to you.*
*And We made not the direction of the formal prayer*
*which* ***you*** *had been towards but that We make evident whoever*
*follows the Messenger from him who turns about on his two heels.*
*And, truly, it had been grave, but for those whom God guided.*
*And God had not been wasting your belief.*
*Truly, God is Gentle toward humanity, Compassionate.* (2:143)
*Surely, We see the going to and fro of* ***your*** *face toward heaven.*
*Then, We will turn* ***you*** *to a direction of formal prayer*
*that* ***you*** *will be well-pleased with it.*
*Then, turn* ***your*** *face to the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.*
*And wherever you had been, turn your faces to its direction.*
*And, truly, those who were given the Book know that it is The Truth*
*from their Lord, and God is not*
*One Who is Heedless of what they do.* (2:144)
*And even if* ***you*** *were to bring to those who were given the Book*

*every sign, they would not heed **your** direction of formal prayer.*
*Nor are **you** one who heeds their direction of formal prayer.*
*Nor are some of them ones who heed the direction of the others*
*formal prayer. And if **you** had followed their desires after the*
*knowledge brought about to **you**,*
*then, truly, **you** would be among the ones who are unjust.* (2:145)
*Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it as they recognize*
*their children, while, truly, a group of people among them keep*
*back The Truth while they know* (2:146)
*it is The Truth from **your** Lord.*
*So be **you** not among the ones who contest.* (2:147)

## COMMENTARY°

This passage is almost entirely devoted to a discussion of the change of the *qibla*, or direction faced in formal prayer, which occurred sixteen or seventeen months after the Prophet's arrival in Madinah in 622 CE, and the controversy that attended it. No reference can be found in the Quran to the exact date of the change of the *qibla*.

The change of the *qibla* was a central event in the history of the Quranic message with far-reaching long-term consequences. It gave Muslims a new focus and identified the Muslim community as an independent nation with a *qibla* of its own.

Before the Quranic message, the Arabs revered the Kabah and considered it a symbol of their religious and cultural heritage and glory. But in order to test their sincerity in accepting Islam, and ensure that their hearts were totally free of narrow racial or tribal loyalties, God initially instructed the Prophet to command his followers to adopt Jerusalem as the direction they faced in prayer. It was a difficult instruction to carry out, but it was a crucial test of how much they really understood the nature and the spirit of their new religion. It was necessary in order to establish how far some of those early Muslims were still influenced by pre-Quranic racial and tribal traditions.

Changing the *qibla* back to the Kabah seems the only logical conclusion from that discussion of the dispute between the Muslims on the one hand, and the Jews, Christians and idol worshipping Arabs on the other, concerning Abraham's covenant with God and the right to his heritage. That covenant bound Abraham and his descendants, from one generation to another, to total submission to God.

The Quran describes the Muslim community variously as the leading community, a consummately upright nation and a paradigm of moderation. This special acclaim is only conferred upon them by

virtue of the fact that they draw their philosophy, outlook, traditions and way of life from God's revelations.

### A MIDDLE COMMUNITY AND A PURE FAITH

It is clear from the course of the discussion (2:142-2:143) The Quran goes on to direct the Prophet to the proper course of action in dealing with the questions that would arise and how to put the whole issue in its proper perspective. (2:142) Places and directions carry no intrinsic merit in themselves, except inasmuch as God assigns them such merit, and to whatever direction one turns, God will be there. It is God's prerogative to guide whomever He wishes to the right path.

The Chapter goes on to outline the central position the Muslim community, or *umma*, occupies in the world, and the great role it is destined to play in the history and development of humanity. A prerequisite of that status and role is that the Muslim *umma* should have its own exclusive *qibla* and distinct identity. It must, first and foremost, owe allegiance to none other than God Almighty, who has commissioned it for that great task: (2:143)

The Arabic term *wasat*, used in this sign to describe the global Muslim community, is a vivid epithet which evokes a much wider range of meaning than is given by its literal equivalent of 'middle'. The term is used here in a very broad sense. Thus, the Muslim community, or *umma*, to use the Quranic term, is a middle-of-the-road community which stands witness against other nations and communities in the sense that it upholds and defends justice and equality for all people. It weighs up their values, standards, traditions, concepts and objectives, judging them as either true or false. It occupies the dual position of being a witness against humanity and an umpire administering justice among them. God's Messenger, Muhammad, is, in turn, a witness against the Muslim community in the sense that, as its leader and guardian, he defines its aims, activities and obligations, and charts the direction it should take. His teachings, example and leadership stimulate the community to appreciate its role and position in the world, and live up to their requirements.

The Muslim community occupies the middle ground in its beliefs and outlook on life. It maintains a healthy and equitable balance between the two extremes of spiritual asceticism and materialism. It treats a person as a balanced combination of body, soul and spirit, and allows him the opportunity and means to satisfy them both in such a way as to uplift the soul and enhance the quality of human life. Within this framework of balance and moderation, every constructive talent, ability, aptitude, and activity is nourished and en-

couraged to grow and play its part in society.

The Muslim community is balanced in the sense that it is not rigid or dogmatic. It holds fast to its ideals and traditions, and to the sources of its religion and way of life, while fostering change and progress in all fields. It is an open society that welcomes new ideas and learns from the work and experience of other societies, cultures and civilizations. Its main objective is to seek the truth, wherever that may come from, and to adopt it with courage and confidence.

Balance and moderation are clear in the way Muslim society is run and organized. It is neither a permissive, undisciplined community nor a regimented one run by brute force or rigid rules. It is a society raised on learning, education and rich cultural and social traditions.

Within the Muslim 'middle' community, equitable and fair relationships are cultivated and regulated among all individuals and social groups in the community. Individual rights and liberties are guaranteed and protected in order to encourage innovation, production and growth, in a manner that will serve the common good without infringing upon the rights of the individual, or endangering society as a whole. Individual as well as collective rights and obligations are clearly defined to enable people to serve a society that will care for them and protect their rights and interests.

The Muslim community is also the middle nation geographically, because the part of the world where Islam first emerged, and which continues to represent the heart of the Muslim world, occupies a central position in the world as a whole. It has been a crucible of cultures and civilizations and a busy crossroads for trade from all corners of the earth. It has been, throughout history, a rich source of vital natural resources and raw materials of many kinds for nations and civilizations all over the world. This position has given the Quranic community a strategic and influential role to play on the world stage.

Having announced that the Kabah was to be the permanent, universal direction of prayer for Muslims, the Chapter now reveals the purpose behind the previous choice of Jerusalem as a temporary *qibla*. (2:143) From these few words one can immediately identify the divine approach in educating the Muslims and preparing them, from that early stage of their development, for the role of custodian of God's message and the leadership of humanity. As part of that transformation, it was essential for that nascent community to be freed of all traces of paganism and ethnocentricity, and to become totally obedient and dedicated to the new religion embodied in the Quranic message. The early Muslims had to realize that their values

and standards in life must, from then on, be derived from the divine revelations being regularly communicated to the Prophet Muhammad.

In pre-Quranic days, certain elements of idol worshipping and racism had crept into the Arabs' understanding of the faith of Abraham and the status of the Sacred House in Makkah. The Kabah had come to be venerated as an exclusively Arab shrine. This was contrary to its intended purpose, since it had been established by Abraham and his son Ishmael as a symbol of purely monotheistic faith and for the reverence and worship of God alone.

To correct the situation and to test their faith and loyalty to the Prophet Muhammad, God commanded the Muslims to adopt Jerusalem as the direction they face in prayer. Although it was not clear to the Muslims at the time, the measure was meant to be a temporary one, specifically intended to decide where their allegiance would really lie.

It was a delicate decision, but the Quranic message is a complete and self-sufficient one. It does not need to be supplemented or augmented by other religious beliefs. It does not accept any lingering traces of un-Quranic ways, serious or trivial. This is indeed the point implied in the Quranic statement: (2:143) God certainly knows everything before it happens. However, He wishes that what is kept deep in people's hearts should first appear in action before He holds them accountable for it.

It was also a critical decision because God was aware that it was going to be a hard test for some Muslims, still fresh from idolatry. But He was also there to provide help and support for the sincere ones: (2:143) With God's guidance every difficulty becomes easy.

For yet further reassurance, God affirms that the formal prayers the Muslims had performed facing Jerusalem were valid and the reward for them guaranteed. (2:143) God would have never burdened the Muslims with more than He knew they would be able to bear. As long as their intentions were genuine and their determination sincere, God was sure to come to their assistance and lighten the tasks expected of them. If a certain hardship or test is meant to reflect God's wisdom and purpose, passing such a test is indicative of His mercy and compassion.

Thus the Muslims could feel content, confident and free of worry about the past and the future.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### GUIDE TO LISTENING CRITICALLY

Listen carefully to what the Quranic signs are saying.
Take them seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence among them.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.
Seek examples and analogies to them.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of others.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.
Maintain a healthy sense of skepticism.

It is important to engage in an assignment that actually teaches critical listening. This will help you learn how to listen critically to what others are saying or asking you to do. You have to understand the assignment well in order to do a good job in following it. You can describe discussions on videotapes about the Quran in writing, then compare your version in small groups with others, trying to accurately reconstruct what you heard. Whenever possible, you should watch the piece a second time to verify what you heard or settle conflicting accounts of what you heard and what others heard. While watching a video, take notes. Afterward, compare and discuss your notes with your classmates. A leader of your group could every few minutes stop the video and have you outline the main point and raise critical questions.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to study and learn listening skills that I had not been aware of before.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

## LESSON 87(10) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a the human being who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake —his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self-evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Therefore, I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-

data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible **fashion.**[3]

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)

## Quranic Signs 2:148-2:152

**Madinah:** *And everyone has a direction to that which he turns.*
*Be forward, then, in good deeds.*
*Wherever you be, God will bring you altogether for the Judgment.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (2:148)
*And from wherever* ***you*** *had gone forth, then, turn* ***your*** *face*
*in the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.*
*And, truly, this is The Truth from* ***your*** *Lord,*
*and God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.* (2:149)
*And from wherever* ***you*** *had gone forth,*
*then, turn* ***your*** *face to the direction of the Masjid al-Haram.*
*And wherever you had been, then, turn your faces to the direction of it*
*so that there be no disputation from humanity against you,*
*but from those of them who did wrong.*
*Dread them not, then, but dread Me.*
*And I fulfill My divine blessing on you—*
*so that perhaps you will be truly guided—* (2:150)
*as We sent to you a Messenger from among you*
*who recounts Our signs to you,*
*and makes you pure, and teaches you the Book and wisdom,*
*and teaches you what you be knowing not.* (2:151)
*So remember Me and I will remember you.*
*And give thanks to Me, and be not ungrateful!* (2:152)

### Commentary°

This section urges Muslims not to deviate from the path charted for them by the Quranic message, and to compete among themselves in their pursuit of constructive and beneficial goals. They will, even-

tually, return to God, to whom all 'humanity will be gathered: (2:148)

The instruction to face the Sacred Mosque in Makkah is reiterated in the following sign (2:149) The point here has nothing to do with the people of earlier revelations. It is an order to the Prophet to turn towards the Sacred Mosque wherever he offers his prayers, emphasizing that what God reveals to him is the truth.

Then comes a third reiteration of the institution of the new direction of prayer, but this new statement has a different purpose, namely to refute the argument made by the Jews and other people that taking Jerusalem as the direction of prayer was a vindication of their claim that their religion was superior to that of Muhammad. It was also meant to counter the argument of the idol worshipping Arabs who had exploited the situation to turn their fellow Arabs, who venerated the Kabah, away from the Quranic message. (2:150) The Muslims in Madinah were reminded that God was on their side and would look after them until they were fully developed and transformed into the leading community they were destined to become.

The Muslims of that small community knew very well what God Almighty meant by the reminder: (2:150) Only a few years earlier they had been wallowing in tribal ignorance, dogged by futile internecine conflicts, and preoccupied with worldly pursuits.

The same words of Abraham's prayer (2:129) are used here (2:151-2:152), thus establishing a direct and significant link between the two Prophets and their religion. The Quranic message was not, then, invented or born out of expediency, but had its origins firmly rooted in history. The direction of formal prayer that was being instituted had not been chosen haphazardly or without purpose. It was the answer to Abraham's passionate and sincere prayers.

... *and teaches you the Book and wisdom* ... This incorporates what has been mentioned earlier about reciting God's revelations included in His book, and emphasizes its essential subject matter, i.e. wisdom. Wisdom is acquired as the fruit of instruction in this book, i.e. the Quran. It is a quality which ensures that anyone who has it views matters in their proper perspective and evaluates them correctly. He has the necessary understanding to appreciate the aims behind God's commandments and teachings.

### WHEN GOD REMEMBERS HIS SERVANTS

This passage is concluded with yet another reminder of God's favors to the Muslim community. God calls on Muslims to remember and praise Him, and in return He will remember them: *Remember Me and I will remember you and be not ungrateful!* (2:152) This is the greatest privilege any human being can receive from God, whose

generosity is limitless and whose benevolence knows no bounds.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### Develop Questions About Questions

Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
How does the Quran teach us to think critically?
What is the question I am trying to answer?
Can I put the question in a better way?
Is the question I am asking clear? or too complex?
How do you evaluate the question?
What would need to be done to answer this question?
How can we find out?
What does this question assume?
Would x put the question differently?
How could someone settle this question?
Can we break this question down at all?
Is the question clear? Do we understand it?
Is this question easy or hard to answer? Why?
Does this question ask us to evaluate something?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

## Lesson 87(11) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:153-2:163

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Pray for help with patience and formal prayer.*
*Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast.* (2:153)
*And say not about those who are slain in the way of God:*
*They are lifeless. Nay! They are living,*
*except you are not aware.* (2:154)
*We will, certainly, try you with something of fear and hunger and*
*diminution of wealth and lives and fruits, and give good tidings*
*to the ones who remain steadfast,* (2:155)
*those who, when an affliction lit on them, they said:*
*Truly, we belong to God and, truly,*
*we are ones who return to Him.* (2:156)
*Those, blessings will be sent on them from their Lord and mercy.*
*And those, they are the ones who are truly guided.* (2:157)
*Truly, Safa and Marwa are among the Waymarks of God,*
*so whoever made the pilgrimage to Makkah to the House*
*or visited the Kabah, then, there is no blame on him*
*that he circumambulates between the two.*

*And whoever volunteered good,*
*then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158)
*Truly, those who keep back what We caused to descend*
*of the clear portents and the guidance,*
*after We made it manifest to humanity in the Book*
*—those, God curses them*
*and the ones who curse, curse them.* (2:159)
*But those who repented, and made things right,*
*and made things manifest, then, those*
*—I will turn to them in forgiveness.*
*And I am The Accepter of Repentance,*
*The Compassionate.* (2:160)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful, and they died*
*and they were ones who are ungrateful,*
*those, on them is a curse of God,*
*and the angels and humanity, one and all.* (2:161)
*They are ones who will dwell in it forever.*
*The punishment will not be lightened for them*
*nor will they be given respite.* (2:162)
*And your God is One God. There is no god but He,*
*The Merciful, The Compassionate.* (2:163)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE POWER OF PATIENCE

Patience is mentioned frequently in the Quran. God is aware that patience is an essential element in maintaining a steady and balanced pace in the face of the inevitable hardships and adversities of life. It is a prime requirement for the Muslim community in its universal responsibility for establishing God's order on earth.

Patience is required on the personal level for observing one's religious duties, for resisting temptation, misfortune, poverty, oppression and injustice, and for carrying out one's responsibilities towards the establishment of the Quranic way of life in society. Patience and perseverance are required to remain always on the alert, ready to give whatever sacrifice may be needed.

### SACRIFICING ONE'S LIFE

The Quran continues with its spiritual mobilization of the pioneering Muslim community of Madinah, as the latter braces itself for the crucial and momentous task of leading humanity back to God. It outlines the major demands and consequences of its hard and long struggle, or *jihad*, with its attendant sacrifices. It identifies the proper and correct criteria for the evaluation and appraisal of its outcome: (2:154)

The Chapter continues to mobilize the believers for the hard, long struggle ahead and increase their understanding of things to come: (2:155-156)

God is the ultimate sovereign and final arbiter. To Him we turn for guidance on every matter. This is the essence of true submission, which comes from full recognition of His control of our destiny and our fate. Such are the true believers who show patience and endure with fortitude. God's Messenger gives them the happy news of having earned their reward from God, the most bounteous. The blessings they receive are guaranteed by God: (2:157) It is indeed a noble and honorable reward that they will receive. Indeed, they share in the same type of reward the Prophet himself receives. What is more is that they have a testimony by God making it clear that they are rightly guided. This, again, is an honorable status.

The foregoing passage has given us a glimpse of God's amazing but effective approach in educating the Muslim community and preparing its ranks for upholding His order and carrying it on to the rest of human kind.

### A VERY SIGNIFICANT RITUAL

Safa and Marwah are among the symbols set up by God. Whoever visits the Sacred House for pilgrimage or the visitation (*umra*), would do no wrong to walk to and fro between them. (2:158)

The word *shukur*, which means "being grateful", used in the Arabic original to describe God's response to voluntary acts, conveys a very friendly impression. It has the added connotation that God Almighty is very pleased with these acts and thanks His servants for doing them. This would surely demand respect and modesty towards God on the part of His human servants. If God describes Himself as thankful to His servant for any good action that servant does, how can we be sufficiently grateful to God in our praise of Him? The connotations of divine compassion and mercy implied here defy description in human language.

### SUPPRESSING THE TRUTH

The signs that follow launch a sharp attack on those who concealed facts that were revealed in their Scriptures in the wake of the controversy they created over the change of the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the Kabah. This suggests that they continued to exploit the situation, especially after Makkah was also instituted as the place of the pilgrimage for Muslims. (2:159-2:162)

Those who persist and refuse to repent, however, shall meet their nemesis in the worst possible way, because they rejected God's hos-

pitality and consciously chose to perpetrate evil and falsehood: (2:161-2:163)

The passage (2:161-2:163) affirms the principle of God's Oneness as an essential part of true faith and a solid foundation for the human being's moral and social systems. The One God is the only deity to be adored and worshipped, and He is also the sole source of the moral codes and norms, and the origin of all the laws and regulations that govern and control the human being's social, political and economic life and the life of the whole cosmos: (2:163) The Quran hammers home these concepts so as to leave people in no doubt that the principle of God's Oneness permeates all aspects of life and all parts of existence. God's sovereignty over this world and His active control of its affairs stem from His grace attributes. He is *The Merciful, The Compassionate.*"

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

THINK ABOUT:

How to think?
How to expand your ideas before they are evaluated?
How to confront new ideas?
How to relate new ideas to your own experience?
How to determine the implications of your ideas and your consequences?

Have a discussion with a friend or in your classroom. Immediately after your discussion, write for five minutes, summarizing the key points, raising new questions, adding analysis, examples, or clarification. Later these notes could be shared and discussed. To develop your abilities to use questioning if you are in a classroom setting, your teacher could present an idea or passage to you and your classmates and have you brainstorm possible questions. Pairs of you can practice questioning each other about issues raised in study, trading the roles of questioner and questioned. Your teacher may provide lists of possible initial questions and perhaps some follow-up questions. You could also be allowed to continue your discussions another day, after you have had time to think. As you practice questioning, see it modeled, and learn the language, skills, and insights of critical thinking. Your mastery of questioning techniques

will increase. The direction and structure of a discussion can be made clearer by periodically summarizing and rephrasing the main points made or by distinguishing the perspectives expressed. To practice exploring the idea of illuminating and probing questioning, you could read and evaluate different kinds of interviews, categorizing the questions asked. You could then list probing follow-up questions that weren't asked, and share your lists and discuss them with your friend or in your classroom. Why would you ask this? How could that be followed up? What would that tell you?

How would your rate yourself? I was able to:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what we are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question myself and others.

## LESSON 87(12) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:164-2:167

**Madinah:** *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and the earth*
*and the alteration of the nighttime and the daytime*
*and the boats that run on the sea with what profits humanity,*
*and what God caused to descend from heaven of water,*
*and gave life to the earth after its death,*
*and disseminated on it all moving creatures,*
*and diversified the winds and the clouds,*
*ones caused to be subservient between heaven and earth,*
*are the signs for a folk who are reasonable.* (2:164)
*Yet there are among humanity*
*some who take to themselves rivals besides God.*
*They love them like they should cherish God.*
*And those who believed are stauncher in cherishing God.*
*And if only those who did wrong would consider*
*when they will see the punishment that all strength belongs to God,*
*and that God is Severe in punishment.* (2:165)
*When they will clear themselves—those who were followed from*
*those who followed them—and they will see the punishment,*

*all cords will be cut asunder from them.* (2:166)
*Those who were followed said: If there be a return again for us,*
*then, we would clear ourselves from them*
*as they cleared themselves from us.*
*Thus, God will cause them to see their actions with regret for them,*
*and they will never be ones who go forth from the fire.* (2:167)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter highlights other natural phenomena: (2:164) All these phenomena deserve our attention, reflection and intelligent study. They are all manifestations of God's awesome power and infinite mercy. Life is the greatest mystery of all. How does it spring out of the earth when water makes it fertile? How does it come about, starting gently at first before manifesting itself with full vigor? By what incredible process is it carried in a seed, an egg or a gene?

Faith gives the believer a new insight into the world around him and a new understanding of beauty, and turns life into one continuous celebration of the creation and glory of God. Nevertheless, there are still those who neither look nor understand. That is the reason they go astray and lose direction in life. (2:165)

In those days these were idols carved out of stone or wood, or they were stars and planets, or angels and devils. In every age these deities take on different forms and sizes. Their common feature is that they are all forms of associating partners with God, whether they are invoked together with God, or treated merely as objects of adoration or on a par with God. In the worst case, they replace God altogether.

But the case is different with true believers: (2:165) Their love for God supersedes their love for everything else in the world. The use of the term love here is both touching and appropriate, because the relationship between God and true believers is one of love and spiritual affection. It is an intimate and private relationship, continuously renewed with an undying adoration.

### ALLIANCES FALL APART

Were these transgressors to look ahead to the Day of Resurrection, they would realize their folly in worshipping anything or anybody other than God. All power belongs to Him. He has neither equals nor partners. They would also see the hopelessness of their actions and the severity of the punishment awaiting them. The leaders shall disassociate themselves from their followers, and shall be exposed as powerless to help them, or even help themselves. The truth of God's Oneness and His absolute power would be clearly manifest.

The followers, on the other hand, would wish for a second chance of life in order to denounce and disown those false gods and leaders. The full extent of the fraud and the delusion under which they had been living would be exposed. (2:165-2:167)

It is an awesome scene in which all the hypocrisy and the insincerity and futility of the relationship between the two groups is brought fully into the open. And then come the pain and the torment: (2:167)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

How do you understand these signs?
Would others see it this way?
Would they use these words?
How would they describe this? Why?
What exactly do they disagree about? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialogical reasoning after studying these signs.

## LESSON 87(13) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

### REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

### QURANIC SIGNS 2:168-2:176

**Madinah:** *O humanity! Eat of what is in and on the earth—*
*lawful, wholesome—and follow not the steps of the Satan.*
*Truly, he is a clear enemy to you.* (2:168)
*Truly, he commands you to evil and depravity,*
*and that you say about God what you know not.* (2:169)
*And when it was said to them:*
*Follow what God caused to descend.*
*They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers*
*were following on it—even though their fathers*
*had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)
*And the parable of those who were ungrateful*
*is like the parable of those who shout to what hears not,*
*but a crying out and pleading*
*yet those to which they call out to are deaf, dumb and blind,*
*so they are not reasonable.* (2:171)
*O those who believed! Eat of what is good that We provided you*
*and give thanks to God*
*if it had been He alone whom you worship.* (2:172)
*Truly, He forbade carrion for you and blood and the flesh of swine*
*and what was hallowed to any other than God,*
*but whoever was driven by necessity,*
*without being one who is willfully disobedient,*
*and not one who turns away, then, it is not a sin for him.*

*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:173)
*Truly, those who keep back what God caused of the Book*
*to descend, and exchange it for a little price,*
*those, they consume not into their bellies but fire.*
*God will not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection*
*nor will He make them pure.*
*And for them will be a painful punishment.* (2:174)
*Those are those who bought fallacy*
*for guidance and punishment for forgiveness.*
*So how they are ones who remain steadfast for the fire!* (2:175)
*That is because God sent down the Book with The Truth*
*and, truly, those who were at variance regarding the Book*
*are in a wide breach.* (2:176)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHICH PATH TO FOLLOW

Humanity, eat of what is lawful and wholesome on earth and do not follow Satan's footsteps: he is indeed an open enemy for you. He enjoins you only to commit evil and indecency and to attribute to God something of which you have no knowledge. When it is said to them: (2:168-2:171)

The signs give the whole of humanity permission to enjoy the food God has provided on earth, with the exception of what He has forbidden—which will be mentioned later in the Chapter. People are also instructed here that they should listen only to God concerning what may or may not be lawful for consumption.

These instructions show plainly how realistic and practical the Quranic message is, and how genuinely aware of the human being's nature and needs. The rule is that everything is lawful with the exception of a few things, which are listed in the Quran by name.

The next sign gives a humiliating image of those blind followers of earlier generations, depicting them as herds of sheep that can hear the shouting and the sounds made by their shepherds but do not understand what those words actually mean. In fact, as the Chapter goes on we realize that they are worse. For while sheep can, at least, see, hear and bleat, while these are heedless and even worse: (2:171)

### THINGS FORBIDDEN TO EAT

The Chapter then gives believers specific rules on the various types of animal meat that they may eat. (2:172-176)

God addresses believers by their most important quality of having accepted the faith, clearly underlining their special relationship with Him and making it clear that they should accept only His in-

structions and guidelines with respect to what is or is not lawful and permissible. They are reminded that He alone provides for them and shows them what is permissible and what is not. Nothing good or wholesome has been forbidden, only what is harmful and corrupt. The purpose behind these few restrictions is not to deprive people or curb their enjoyment of the good things God has made available, and for which they should show gratitude. God directs them to thank Him if they truly worship Him alone. Thus, they are taught that thanksgiving is an act of worship. (2:172)

Then comes a list of what has been forbidden for the Muslims to eat. It starts with an Arabic word which indicates that the restriction is limited to the given items: (2:173)

The meat of animals slaughtered in dedication to something or someone other than God is forbidden for Muslims to eat for that very reason. There is nothing physically wrong with the meat, but it is spiritually tainted by the fact that it was sacrificed in reverence of a creature of God. Of all prohibited things this type is most relevant to faith.

It becomes clear, yet again, how strongly and closely the principle of God's Oneness is linked to the source of religious guidance and lawmaking in the Quranic message, God Almighty.

In establishing the above restrictions, however, the Quranic message takes account of the circumstances under which they would apply. Necessities could arise which would entail a measured lifting or relaxation of those restrictions. These are dictated strictly by the need at the time, and on condition that consumption of forbidden meat is not, in any way, permitted for reasons of self-indulgence or in defiance of God's instructions.

This is a general Quranic principle in all matters of this kind, (2:173), and can be extended to situations of a similar nature. Any life-threatening situation creates a necessity which would allow a person to eat or drink forbidden things if alternatives cannot be found, within the conditions mentioned above.

### SUPPRESSION OF GOD'S REVELATIONS

Elsewhere, the Quran informs us of other types of meat that had been forbidden to the Jews but which Muslims were allowed to eat: (6:146) All these are lawful to Muslims. (2:174-2:176)

Here (2:174) we have a description that is in perfect harmony with the scene being portrayed. Their gain for suppressing the truth is nothing but fire in their bellies. Indeed they are portrayed eating fire. Yet the description is factual. When they are in hell, the fire makes their clothes and their food. As an additional disgrace and hu-

miliation, they are totally ignored in the life to come. Their isolation is given a very graphic description in the text: (2:174)

Another expressive description tells us that they have made an utterly foolish choice by exchanging success for failure and making a losing deal. (2:175) The sarcasm is unmistakable, but it fits the vile actions of concealing the truth that God has revealed for the guidance and benefit of all humanity, and rightly castigates the folly of rejecting guidance and accepting humbug.

The result of deliberately concealing or disputing God's revealed truth is a life of constant turmoil, confusion and conflict with human nature. It is a life of permanent conflict and discord. (2:176)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I found some Quranic signs that are examples of dialectical reasoning because they used some of the following phrases:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

## LESSON 87(14) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:177-2:182

**Madinah:** *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces*
*towards the East or the West.*
*Rather, virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believed in God*
*and the Last Day and the angels and the Book and the Prophets.*
*And whoever gave wealth out of cherishing Him to the possessors*
*of kinship and to the orphans and to the needy*
*and to the traveler of the way and to the one who begs*
*and the freeing of a bondservant,*
*and whoever performed the formal prayer,*
*and gave the purifying alms*
*and the ones who live up to their compac*
*when they made a contrac.*
*and the ones who remain steadfast in desolation and tribulation*
*and at the time of danger, those are those who were sincere*
*and those, they are the ones who are God-conscious!* (2:177)
*O those who believed! Reciprocation was prescribed for you*
*for the slain: the freeman for the freeman and the servant*
*for the servant and the female for the female.*
*But whoever was forgiven a thing by his brother,*
*the pursuing be as one who is honorable,*
*and the remuneration be with kindness.*
*That is a lightening from your Lord, and a mercy.*
*And he who exceeded the limits after that,*
*then, for him is a painful punishment.* (2:178)
*And for you in reciprocation there is the saving of life,*
*O those imbued with intuition,*
*so that perhaps you will be God-conscious.* (2:179)
*It is prescribed for you when death attended anyone of you*
*if one left goods, to bequeath to the ones who are your parents*
*and the nearest kin as the one who is honorable,*

*an obligation for the ones who are God-conscious.* (2:180)
*Then, whoever substituted it after he heard it,*
*truly, the sin of it is only on those who substitute it.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:181)
*Then, whoever feared from one who makes a testament,*
*a swerving from the right path or sin,*
*and, then, made things right between them,*
*there is no sin on him.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:182)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHAT CONSTITUTES VIRTUOUS CONDUCT

This passage concludes with a sign that outlines the principles of true faith together with the rules of proper Quranic conduct: (2:177)

The subject of this sign is clearly linked to the issue of the direction of prayer and the controversy surrounding it, as discussed earlier. It now establishes a comprehensive principle that covers this issue. These mostly centered on new religious rituals and forms of worship introduced by the Quranic message and which differed from their own.

Taken as a whole, the sign spells out the total sum of goodness, or virtuous conduct. What, then, gives these beliefs and actions their value and meaning? What is the value of believing in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the Prophets?

To believe in the Books and the Prophets means to attest, without reservation, to the truth, honesty, and integrity of all the revealed Books and all the Prophets and Messengers God commissioned to deliver them at various times of human history. This leads to a belief in the unity of the human race, serving God alone, abiding by one and the same religion and adhering to one universal divine order. This outlook has a profound effect on the personality of the believer, who is seen as custodian of the heritage of God's Messengers and divine messages.

The next clement of God-consciousness is to spend money, dear as it may be, on one's near of kin, orphans, the needy, the stranded traveller, beggars, and for the freeing of slaves. The significance of this commendable act of charity and sacrifice is that it liberates person from stinginess, selfishness, greed and excessive love of wealth, which cripple one's ability to give and help those who are in need. It is a highly spiritual act of altruism when someone of means has the courage and the generosity to give away his dearest and most precious possessions. It is an act of liberation for the human soul when

person rises above worldly desires and materialistic instincts. It is an admirable achievement, which the Quranic message commends and values very highly.

It is characteristic of the Quranic approach that it aims, first and foremost, at liberating person from his own internal prejudices, weaknesses and desires before going on to liberate him from the pressures and influences of the society around him. Unless one overcomes one's own egotism, one is not likely to stand up to evil and temptation in the world outside.

Charity is also a social value that strengthens the bonds of love and trust within the family unit, the vital nucleus of society, and preserves the dignity of its members. Charity towards orphans in society achieves social justice and helps to save the young and the weak from homelessness, corruption and abuse. For the needy and the destitute, charity provides the care and security by which their dignity is preserved, their standing in society may be enhanced, and their contribution to society assured. It ensures that not a single person in the community is lost, or left uncared for. For travellers who, for one reason or another, find themselves stranded in foreign lands or in societies where they feel alienated, charity can be a lifeline. It is an emergency measure to alleviate an unexpected hardship, and by which they are made to feel that they belong to the global human family.

Begging is forbidden to those who can earn a minimum of sustenance or have jobs. Charity by those who have the means aims to stop this evil practice.

Charity has played a vital role in the Quranic message's fight against turning POWs into slaves. It provided the means to free those unfortunate enough to have been taken prisoner in wars against the Quranic message. This is done by either buying slaves to set them free, or by giving a slave money to buy his own freedom, at a price he agrees with his master. Under the Quranic message, slaves became entitled to their freedom as soon as they demanded it, and they were helped to regain their liberty and dignity by allocating them money from charity and *zakat*. Slaves would then become wage earners, entitled to receive *zakat*. Every effort would be made to speed up their total freedom.

The sign adds that the regular observance of formal prayer is another important aspect of virtuous conduct. Formal prayer is more than a sequence of bodily movements, and there is more to it than facing in a certain direction, east or west. It is more than a simple act of spiritual meditation. Formal prayer, an act of total submission and dedication to God, epitomizes the entire Quranic outlook on life.

The Quranic message recognizes the human being as a complex entity comprising body, mind and soul, and perceives no contradiction or conflict among their respective roles or needs. It, therefore, sees no need for suppressing the functions or needs of any one of them in order to satisfy any of the others. From this perspective we can clearly see how formal prayer combines the activity of all three elements in an integrated act of worship dedicated completely to the adoration and glorification of God Almighty. The bodily movements of standing (*qiyam*), bowing (*ruku*) and prostration (*sujud*), and the recitation of Quranic signs and other prescribed text and the deliberate reflection required on that, and exclusive devotion to God, coalesce beautifully during formal prayer in a unique and splendid combination. Maintaining this standard in the performance of formal prayer is a reminder and a fulfilment of the essence and purpose of the Quranic message as a whole.

Paying the purifying alms (*zakat*) duty is another aspect of virtuous conduct. This is a social tax instituted by God Almighty, the ultimate provider, as a token of the entitlement of the poor to a share in the wealth of the rich. It is clear from the text that *zakat* is separate from, rather than a substitute for, the charitable spending mentioned earlier. While giving to those causes is voluntary, payment of *zakat* is a religious duty in its own right, and both are essential factors in attaining virtuous conduct. Unless this was the case, obviously there would be no meaning in giving *zakat* a separate mention in the same sign.

Keeping one's promises is another aspect of virtuous conduct that the Quran frequently highlights as a feature of true faith and humanity. It is a quality that stems from honesty to God and fulfilment of one's promises to Him. Furthermore, it is an essential requirement for creating an environment of mutual trust and confidence among individuals, societies and nations. History will readily testify to the Muslims' impeccable record in honoring agreements, promises and treaties with allies and enemies alike. The Quranic message has given an unparalleled example of integrity that can never be surpassed.

Steadfastness and perseverance in times of adversity and hardship, and in the face of danger, are necessary qualities for the education and development of strong individuals with solid characters who will stand firm, come what may. Under such conditions the faithful never lose hope or confidence in God, nor will they seek help from any source other than Him.

For the Muslim community, or *umma*, to fulfil its great role of universal leadership of humanity and its task of instituting justice and equality in the world, it is necessary to collectively acquire these

qualities. All should have the resilience to withstand poverty, weakness, loss of friends and allies, shortage of manpower and resources, and the rigors and consequences of war and striving to serve God's cause.

The construction of this part of the sign in the Arabic original indicates that this quality is singled out as especially significant in the context of the sign as a whole. This gives added importance and a higher status in the sight of God to those possessing this quality.

Thus we see how, in the inimitable style of the Quran, a single short sign combines the essentials of faith and personal and financial Islamic obligations and presents them as a complete code under the all-embracing title of virtuous conduct (*al-birr*), which has been variously interpreted as 'virtuous conduct', 'righteousness', 'ultimate goodness' or, indeed, 'faith'. It is essentially a concise and complete statement of the basic philosophy of the Quranic message and the principles of the Islamic code of living that must be evident in any Muslim society.

They will have been sincere in their faith and their commitment to God (2:177), and they will have proved themselves capable of translating that faith into a practical way of life. They are also God-conscious because they are God-conscious and of their bond with His power and grace, and they are conscientious in fulfilling their obligations towards Him.

In reflecting on the contents of this sign, one can clearly visualize the great heights to which God is aiming to raise human beings through the Quranic message, His constitution. But as one looks at those who ignore the Quranic message, or those who resist it and suppress or persecute its followers and supporters, and those who simply turn away from it, one cannot help being filled with sorrow.

Yet we must not despair. Our faith and trust in God fill our hearts with hope and confidence that the day is coming when humanity will come around to seeing the profound value, universal beauty and eternal qualities of the Quranic message.

This passage covers a series of instructions relating to the social organization of the Muslim community during its formative period in Madinah. It also introduces certain aspects of Muslim religious worship. The two parts go hand in hand, and are linked with the notion of maintaining a sense of God-consciousness, or *taqwa*, which is emphasized towards the end of each part. It is worth recalling that the same feature of *taqwa* was highlighted at the end of the previous (2:177), which outlined the fundamental elements of righteousness, incorporating aspects of faith and practical behavior.

The passage discusses the legal aspects of just retribution (*qisas*)

in cases of killing. It outlines rulings on will and inheritance, and outlines provisions relating to fasting, formal prayer, retirement to a mosque for a certain period of time (*itikaf*), and rules governing financial claims.

The outline of each of these and other subjects in the passage is concluded with a direct or an indirect reference to *taqwa*.

This consistent and deliberate approach highlights the essential nature of the religion of the Quranic message. It is an integral system, an indivisible whole. Its social systems, legislative codes, and religious rituals emanate from faith and the comprehensive world order it generates. These are all held together by a common goal of submission to, and veneration of God, the Creator and the Provider, who has instituted person as His vicegerent and custodian in this world. This trusteeship is conditional on the human being's worship of God alone and on receiving all his concepts, systems and laws from Him only.

The passage is a notable example of the cohesion of the various aspects of the Quranic message.

### THE LAW OF JUST RETRIBUTION

The passage (2:178-2:179) begins with an address to the believers, highlighting their main quality of having accepted the faith, which means that they receive their laws from God. They are hereby informed that retribution in cases of killing is permitted to them, in accordance with the provisions laid down in these two signs. They are also called upon to reflect on the purpose and wisdom of this legislation, outlined in the second sign. They are reminded of the need to enhance their sense of God-conscious, which acts as a safety valve against any excess or injustice in punishing those accused of killing.

The statement clearly indicates how retribution ought to be exacted: a free person for a free man, a slave for a slave, a woman for a woman. (2:178) This situation would arise when the victim's relatives decide to accept financial compensation instead of insisting on the execution of the killer in retaliation. Once this is agreed, the victim's relatives are also under an obligation to seek a fair and amicable settlement, while the killer's guardian or representative must, on his part, settle readily and honorably. This serves to clear the air and to remove any ill-feelings or grudges that would have inevitably arisen between the two parties. It would also be conducive to a more friendly and pleasant relationship between the living members of both parties.

This provision has been laid down out of God's grace, as a special favor and an act of mercy towards believers: (2:178) The con-

cession permitting the settlement of cases of killing by financial compensation paid to the victim's family was not given to the Jews in the Torah. For the Quranic message, it has been set up as an alternative aiming to spare lives when agreement and amicable settlement can be reached.
(2:178)

It is not merely the punishment in the hereafter that is certain to come; such aggression means that capital punishment becomes due and financial compensation no longer accepted. Reneging on the agreement constitutes a violation of the agreed settlement and could only fuel hatred, animosity and a desire for vengeance from both sides. Therefore, when the victim's closest relatives have accepted blood money, they can no longer seek retaliation by killing the killer.

We can appreciate the profound wisdom of the Quranic approach and its respect for, and understanding of, human nature and motivation. The Quranic message recognizes anger as a very basic human reaction when one's relative is killed, and the Quranic message satisfies this desire by legislating for just retribution in this way. Rigorous justice cools tempers and helps to remove grudges and deter the killer from offending again.

At the same time, however, the Quranic message holds out the prospect of pardon and opens the way for mutual agreement, defining precisely the principles and rules which govern it. The Quranic message advocates that the alternative of pardon should, therefore, come as a voluntary option accepted by both sides out of a genuine desire for reconciliation, rather than having it forced upon them.

Revealing the profound wisdom underlying this ruling, and its objectives, the sign ends with the words: (2:179) Vengeance, or the satisfaction of grudges, is not the prime goal of this legislation. Its objective is to promote and preserve human life. Furthermore, there is an invitation to reflect on the wisdom of this code and an endeavour to raise believers' consciousness and fear of God.

### LIFE PRESERVATION THROUGH RETRIBUTION

This is achieved by providing strong deterrence, preventing further crimes from being committed. When a person knows for certain that the price he will pay for committing murder is his own life, he is more likely to stop and think before deciding to go ahead. Life is also preserved by giving satisfaction to the victim's relatives in exacting justice on the offender, with the effect that they will neither seek, nor have the right to seek, further revenge on the offender's family. In pre-Quranic Arabia the desire for vengeance knew no limits, leading to protracted wars and conflicts that continued, on and

off, for forty years. There were other family, tribal and clan feuds in which vendettas and bloodshed continued for generations.

The law of just retribution promotes life in a wider and more comprehensive sense. Murder is an aggression on life and a criminal act against humanity as a whole. In preventing a single murder from being committed, the law upholds the inviolability of life as an absolute value. This is a far higher goal than saving the life of an individual or a group of people. It is a goal that enshrines life. More importantly, the sign urges believers to reflect deeply on this matter and discover the wisdom behind the code, in order that you may remain God-conscious.

This is the real deterrent that can prevent murder being committed in the first instance, and stop vendettas being pursued endlessly. Without this measure of deterrence, no law can be successfully upheld and crime can never he effectively rooted out. Laws and regulations that lack such sensitivity, or do not evoke in people the fear and respect of an authority higher and more powerful than the human one, are inadequate and ineffective.

This explains the remarkably small number of cases in which capital punishment was carried out during the Prophet Muhammad's era and that of his early successors. In most of those cases, conviction was based on confessions voluntarily made by the offenders themselves. God-consciousness *taqwa* was evident in the public conscience which, together with enlightened and wise legislation, served as a most effective deterrent. Legal codes and regulations were supplemented by religious discipline, education and exhortation to produce a balanced and virtuous society, with clear concepts of responsibility and justice.

The next piece of legislation introduced in the Chapter relates to personal wills: (2:180-182) Before the later revelation of the signs in Chapter 5 specifying the exact share of inheritance due to each heir, it was an incumbent duty on Muslims to make a will in favor of parents and other near of kin. The Arabic term *khayr*, translated here as property, also means good and goodness, and some commentators interpret it to denote wealth generally.

The Quranic signs, 4:11, 4:12 and 4:176, specifying shares for the distribution of inheritance were revealed at a later date than those under discussion here. Those signs make parents legally entitled to specific shares of their departed children's wealth. Therefore, no bequest by will may be made to them. The Prophet established the rule that no will may be made in favor of an heir. As for other relatives the present rule holds in general terms, except for relatives who are named as heirs in the relevant signs on inheritance in Chapter 4. All

other non-inheriting relatives may be included in a will.

The provision of including non-inheriting relatives in one's will is extremely perceptive because it benefits, in particular, those relatives who are not assigned a share or entitled to any inheritance. Providing for them through a will strengthens family ties and promotes the welfare of the family.

In this way equitable distribution of wealth is guaranteed: heirs are not wronged, and other relatives are not ignored. A will should be made combining moderation, kindness and benevolence. As an additional measure, the Prophet specified that a maximum of one-third, and preferably a quarter, of the inheritance may be bequeathed by will. This ensures that the rights of natural heirs are not unfavorably affected by the will. These legal measures are reinforced, as is the case with all social legislation in the Quran, by God-consciousness.

Anyone having knowledge of the contents of a will who, after the death of the testator, gives himself the right to alter any of its details will be guilty of grave misconduct. The deceased would bear no blame for such unauthorized alteration: (2:181) God will be the witness to the deceased's innocence as well as to the guilt of those who tamper with the will, and He will deal with each of them accordingly.

There is, however, one exceptional situation in which an executor may amend the contents of a will. This arises when the executor realizes that the will favors some beneficiaries at the expense of others or that it prejudices one or more of the heirs. (2:182) Here again, the action is closely linked to how conscientious and God-conscious the people involved are. This quality, as we saw earlier in our discussion of just retribution, is the basis of the Quranic concepts of justice and honesty, and of public responsibility in a Quranic society.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. You should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions we all face in-

clude the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific, Quranic ideas should be continuously raised. You need to learn to come to your own conclusions, raise thought-provoking issues, be allowed extended discussion of them and help keep the discussion focussed. Have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Be clear about your objectives so that you feel that you are moving towards them in an affective way.

QUESTIONS

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on the deep questioning strategy in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

## Lesson 87(15) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Using Information, Data, Facts, Observations

**How to use information will become clear by answering the following questions:**

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:183-2:188

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Formal fasting was prescribed for you as it was prescribed*
*for those who were before you so that perhaps*
*you will be God-conscious.* (2:183)
*Fasting is prescribed for numbered days.*
*Then, whoever among you had been sick or on a journey,*

*then, a period of other days.*
*And for those who cannot fast is a redemption of food*
*for the needy.*
*And whoever volunteered good, it is better for him.*
*And that you formally fast is better for you*
*if you had been knowing.* (2:184)
*The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran*
*was caused to descend—a guidance for humanity—*
*and clear portents of the guidance,*
*and the Criterion between right and wrong.*
*So whoever of you bore witness to the month,*
*then, formal fasting, and whoever had been sick or on a journey,*
*then, a period of other days.*
*God wants ease for you, and wants not hardship for you,*
*so that you perfect the period and that you magnify God*
*because He guided you*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (2:185)
*And when My servants asked you about Me, then, truly, I am near.*
*I answer the call of one who calls when he will call to Me.*
*So let them respond to Me and let them believe in Me,*
*so that perhaps they will be on the right way.* (2:186)
*It is permitted for you on the nights of formal fasting*
*to have sexual intercourse with your wives.*
*They (f) are a garment for you and you are a garment for them (f).*
*God knew that you had been dishonest to yourselves*
*so He turned to you in forgiveness and pardoned you.*
*So now lie with them (f) and look for what God prescribed for you.*
*And eat and drink until the white thread becomes clear to you*
*from the black thread at dawn.*
*Again, fulfill the formal fasting until night.*
*And lie not with them (f) when you are ones*
*who cleave to the places of prostration.*
*These are the ordinances of God.*
*Then, come not near them.*
*Thus, God makes His signs manifest to humanity*
*so that perhaps they will be God-conscious.* (2:187)
*And consume not your wealth between yourselves in falsehood,*
*nor let it down in bribes to the ones who judge*
*so that you consume a group of peoples wealth among humanity*
*in sin while you know.* (2:188

## COMMENTARY°

### FASTING: ITS NATURE AND PURPOSE

For the Muslim community, or *umma*, duty-bound to undertake a campaign of struggle, i.e. *jihad*, as a means of establishing God's universal order, to assume the leadership of humanity, and to stand witness against the rest of humanity, it is only natural that fasting should he made obligatory. Fasting is a means of testing the human being's determination and will-power, and an important aspect of the human being's relationship with God. It is a discipline that teaches person how to rise above his physical needs and overcome the pressure of temptation in order to earn God's blessings and reward. (2:183-2:185)

### EXEMPTION FROM FASTING WHEN TRAVELING

As far as fasting while traveling is concerned, one gets the distinct impression that the ruling is strongly in favor of exemption from fasting without restricting the exemption to cases of hardship. As for the licence to break the fast during illness, apart from the different opinions of scholars, it also seems to be granted unconditionally and without qualification. Implicit in this ruling is the requirement that the missing days must be compensated for at a later date, with no requirement to make the compensatory fasting days consecutive.

### OBLIGATORY FASTING

This (2:184) is followed by the recommendation that, apart from cases of illness or travel, fasting would be more beneficial and preferable despite the hardship or discomfort it might cause: (2:184) There is here an obvious element of education and training of will-power to enable Muslims to make the effort to fast. This also highlights the health benefits of fasting, in spite of the strain, all of which are important factors in the Quranic self-education process.

These recommendations were a step towards the withdrawal of the exemption for non-travelling healthy people and making fasting in the month of Ramadan obligatory, as given in (2:185). The concession remained valid for elderly people who find fasting in Ramadan too strenuous and are not expected to be able to fast at a later date.

The Chapter gives the Muslims yet another incentive to keep the fast: (2:185) This statement encapsulates the fundamental principle on which all Quranic duties are founded. They are intended to be easy, not arduous. This indicates a generous and realistic outlook on life as a whole. It instils in the Muslim heart a tolerant, easy and agreeable attitude. Religious and social activities and responsibilities

are discharged with ease, confidence and assurance, in the happy knowledge that God's purpose is to enable person to go through life with the minimum of hardship or discomfort.

To complete a whole month, sick people or those who travel in Ramadan and avail themselves of the special concession are required to make up for days missed by fasting an equal number of days at a later date in the year: (2:185)

Fasting is an occasion to celebrate God's guidance, glory and grace. Therefore, the requirement: (2:185) It is a time during which believers can feel and appreciate God's favors and reciprocate with thanks, submission and gratitude. In so doing, Muslims cultivate the precious and vital quality of *taqwa*, or God-consciousness; a main objective of fasting.

Thus we can see how evident God's grace is in the imposition of the duty of fasting which, on the face of it, seems hard and demanding. We can clearly see its educational and disciplinary benefits for a nation being prepared for the leadership of humanity, guided by a genuine fear of God, a keen sense of accountability, and a vigorous conscience.

### A Close Relationship with God

Interposed among the signs dealing with fasting comes a sign reflecting a profound insight into human nature. It reaches to the deepest recesses of the human psyche, offering solace and ample rewards for keeping the fast in response to God's commands: (2:186) How kind and compassionate God truly is! Any hardship encountered in keeping the fast fades in comparison with this friendly and gentle reassurance. The choice of words creates an atmosphere of intimacy and accessibility, with God Himself stating a direct contact between Him and His servants. He does not give instructions to His Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad on how to answer believers' questions about Him. He gives the answer Himself: (2:186)

This sign fills a believer's heart with love, confidence and utter reassurance. In this atmosphere of friendliness and compassion, God, who has no need for anyone, directs believers to respond to Him and believe in Him, in the hope that this will guide them to wisdom and righteousness. (2:186) By earning God's generosity and guidance, believers end up winners on all counts.

### Further Rules on Fasting

The Chapter then resumes its elaboration on the rules of fasting. It points out that, in addition to food and drink, married Muslims are permitted sexual intimacy with their spouses between sunset and

dawn. It gives the exact time for the fasting which extends from dawn till sunset. It points out that during any period when people retire to a mosque for worship in Ramadan, i.e. *itikaf*, sexual intimacy is not permitted for married people. (2:187)

### HONESTY AT ALL TIMES

Within this context of fasting and abstention from food and drink, the Chapter sounds another warning, this time against usurping other people's possessions. The sign refers specifically to presenting false and fraudulent evidence before a judge or an arbiter in order to obtain a favorable judgement giving one the right to appropriate someone else's property. To reinforce the sense of deterrence, the warning follows immediately after reference to the bounds set by God and the call for more consciousness and fear of Him. (2:188)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of your own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

## LESSON 87(16) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:189-2:196

**Madinah:** *They ask you about the new moons.*
*Say: They are appointed times for humanity,*
*and the pilgrimage to Makkah.*
*It is not virtuous conduct that you approach houses from the back.*
*Rather, virtuous conduct was to be God-conscious,*
*and approach houses from their front doors.*
*And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will prosper.* (2:189)

**See Prelude (2:190)**
**See Prelude (2:191)**
**See Prelude (2:192)**
**See Prelude (2:193)**
**See Prelude (2:194)**

*And spend in the way of God, and cast not yourselves*
*by your own hands into deprivation by fighting. And do good.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195)
*And fulfill the pilgrimage to Makkah, and the visit for God.*
*And if you were restrained, then, whatever was feasible*
*of sacrificial gifts.*
*And shave not your heads until the sacrificial gift*
*reaches its place of sacrifice.*
*Then, whoever had been sick among you,*
*or has an injury of his head, then, a redemption of formal fasting,*
*or charity or a ritual sacrifice.*
*And when you were safe, then, whoever took joy in the visit*
*and the pilgrimage to Makkah then whatever was feasible*

*of a sacrificial gift. Then, whoever finds not the means,*
*then, formal fasting for three days during the pilgrimage*
*to Makkah and seven when you returned,*
*that is ten completely.*
*That would be for he whose people are not ones who are present*
*at the Masjid al-Haram.*
*And be God-conscious of God*
*and know that God is Severe in repayment.* (2:196)

COMMENTARY°

This new passage resumes the elaboration of religious obligations and practical rules governing behavior within the Muslim community and its relations with the outside world. (See Prelude)

It explains the religious and practical significance of the phases of the moon. It dismisses the pre-Quranic Arab superstitious practice of entering houses through the back door on certain occasions. It outlines the rules governing war and fighting generally, as well as the prohibition of fighting in the four lunar months and particularly in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. It ends with a comprehensive description of the rituals of the pilgrimage and the visitation (*umra*) as prescribed by Islam, revising, modifying and replacing all the pagan and idolatrous concepts and practices of former times.

In one concise passage, and in a succinctly clear style, the Quran lays down rules and principles relating to faith and belief, the regulation of religious rituals and practices, as well as war and fighting. These are all linked and interlaced with powerful admonitions and comments evocative of God and His power.

On correcting the Arab practice of entering houses through the back door, the Chapter points out that form, in itself, is not what really matters but it is one's God-consciousness. It says: (2:189)

The Chapter calls on Muslims to spend of their wealth for the cause of God, exhorting them to (2:195)

The Chapter again emphasizes God-consciousness when dealing with the pilgrimage rituals. (2:196) (2:197) (2:203)

It is quite clear that there is a common thread firmly binding these instructions and rulings together. Matters of faith, ritual and law, the spiritual and the mundane, the religious and the secular, the personal, national and international, are all intertwined and spun together in one comprehensive, universal religious and social system based on rules and laws laid down directly by God.

## THE QURANIC TRANSFORMATION

Beginning with this passage, we note a salient feature recurring in the rest of the Chapter. We find the Muslims addressing the Prophet Muhammad with specific questions relating to a wide range of everyday issues and situations they were encountering in their new way of life. They reveal a genuine desire on the part of the new Muslims to find out what their new religion has to say about these matters. The believers wanted to learn more about how the Quranic message viewed and interpreted the social and physical phenomena they were experiencing in the world around them.

They asked questions about the moon and the various phases it goes through. Why does it start as a fine crescent which becomes bigger until it develops into a full sphere, and then reverse—the cycle until it disappears altogether before it is reborn in the shape of a thin crescent again?

They asked questions about what part and how much of their wealth they should give away as charity. They asked questions about war, and whether it would be allowed during the sacred months and in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. They asked for Islamic rulings on alcoholic drinks and gambling, which were social habits in pre-Quranic Arabian life.

They asked questions about menstruation, and whether sexual contact between spouses was allowed during such periods. They asked about even more intimate and personal issues concerning matrimonial relations. These questions were sometimes raised by women.

Questions relating to other issues are to be found in several other Chapters in the Quran. The fact that they were raised is in itself significant in more ways than one.

To begin with, it indicates a high degree of enlightenment and dynamism in the Muslim society, which was already developing a distinct character. A sense of community was rapidly growing. The Muslims were no longer a set of isolated individuals, nor were they any longer separate tribes scattered all over Arabia. They had become a nation with its own identity, systems and relationships, in which every person was keen to assume his or her role and position. This new social, intellectual and emotional awareness was brought about by Islam, and was molded by the Islamic outlook on life, its system and its pioneering views and concepts.

Second, this inquisitiveness also indicates a keen sense of religious consciousness emerging in the new society. It reflects the depth and strength of the hold the new faith had taken on the hearts and minds of its followers. Having discarded their old assumptions and

attitudes, and wrenched themselves away from pre-Quranic customs and traditions, they lost confidence in the old order and began asking questions looking to their new religion for education and guidance in all aspects of life.

This state of emotional and intellectual awareness is generated by true faith. The believer is freed from all former beliefs and traditions. He begins to view with scepticism all previously held ideas, and to subject all his actions to fresh scrutiny. The believer becomes readily receptive to the directives of the new faith, and keen to reform his or her life accordingly. Even those former concepts and practices which are approved or adopted by the new order will assume a new context as they are integrated into the new faith.

The new order need not necessarily replace the old one in every detail, but it is important that those details adopted by the new faith should be assimilated and incorporated into it in substance as well as in spirit. This is very well illustrated by the pre-Quranic pilgrimage rituals which the Quranic message transforms into a new set of rules, hardly bearing any resemblance to those formerly practised by the Arabs.

The situation today is not very different. Human nature has not changed and the Quran is also there. Neither person nor the Muslim world community will be safe until the Quran assumes conduct of the battle as it did for the first generation of Muslims. Unless Muslims realize this fact they cannot hope to succeed or prosper.

The least that results from such a realization is that Muslims would approach the Quran with the same understanding and attitude. The Quran would be seen as a dynamic, active force, formulating new concepts, facing up to anti-Quranic ideas, insulating Muslims against ignorance and deviation and helping them avoid the pitfalls. This would be far removed from the present approach many have adopted towards the Quran, viewing it merely as a fine work of literature and going no farther than reciting it rhythmically or chanting its words like a melody on certain occasions.

The Quran was revealed for a totally different purpose. God meant it as a blueprint for a complete way of life, a stimulus, a driving force guiding the Muslim community, charting its course through thick and thin, and helping it overcome and avoid all the difficulties and obstacles it is bound to encounter in this world.

### THE NEW MOON AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE

They ask you about the new moons: (2:189) Some reports suggest that the Prophet Muhammad was asked why the moon goes through its various phases. Others say that he was asked why have

the crescent moons been created, which seems to be more consistent with the answer given in the Chapter: They are signs for people to mark fixed periods of time, and for the pilgrimage.

### THE PILGRIMAGE AND VISITATION (*UMRA*)

Whether this custom related to the pilgrimage only, which seems more probable, or to travelling in general, the Arabs had maintained the belief that it was a sign of piety and virtuous conduct to uphold it. However, the Quran refutes that as an empty gesture that could serve no religious purpose. It goes on to establish the proper religious concept of virtuous conduct as God-consciousness and His presence at all times and in all situations, rather than as a routine gesture that had no meaning whatsoever. Therefore it gives the instruction that houses must be approached from the front, and re-emphasizes the importance of God-consciousness as the road to success in this life.

Let us now take a closer look at the signs on pilgrimage in this Chapter and the instructive message they convey. (2:196) *Ihram*, or consecration, involves that men discard their normal clothes and wear simple unsewn garments, refraining from shaving or cutting their hair, covering their head, clipping their nails, hunting, and sexual contact with their spouse. This state is assumed at specified locations outside Makkah, each known as *miqat*, and for the main part of the pilgrimage and the whole of the *umra*. Women observe the same restrictions but wear sewn clothes, often all white.

The first thing to notice about this sign is the precision with which it treats the subject. It is divided into a number of short, well-defined instructions. Any exceptions or provisions relating to each ruling are made immediately before moving on to the next. The passage is rounded off with a strong emphasis on God-consciousness.

The first article stresses the fact that once one has decided to perform the pilgrimage or the visitation, one must do so in full and dedicate one's actions to God:

Exemption from completing the pilgrimage or the *umra* is granted when one is prevented from doing so either by an enemy or, by illness or other exceptional circumstances. The same applies to the case of being prevented from completing the rites. (2:196) If prevented by force, pilgrims offers a sacrifice within the means at their disposal. They would then be able to terminate their state of consecration, or *ihram*, at the point they reached, even though they might not have performed any of the rituals other than going into the state of consecration.

The sign refers to whatever offering you can easily afford. This includes animals such as camels, cows, sheep, or goats. Pilgrims

should sacrifice whatever they can easily afford, and several people may share in a single camel or cow. In the *umra* of al-Hudaybiyah, as many as seven people shared in the sacrifice of one camel. On the other hand, one person may choose to offer a sheep or a goat, which would suffice. The exemption serves to mitigate hardship such as that encountered at al-Hudaybiyah, or which might arise as a result of illness.

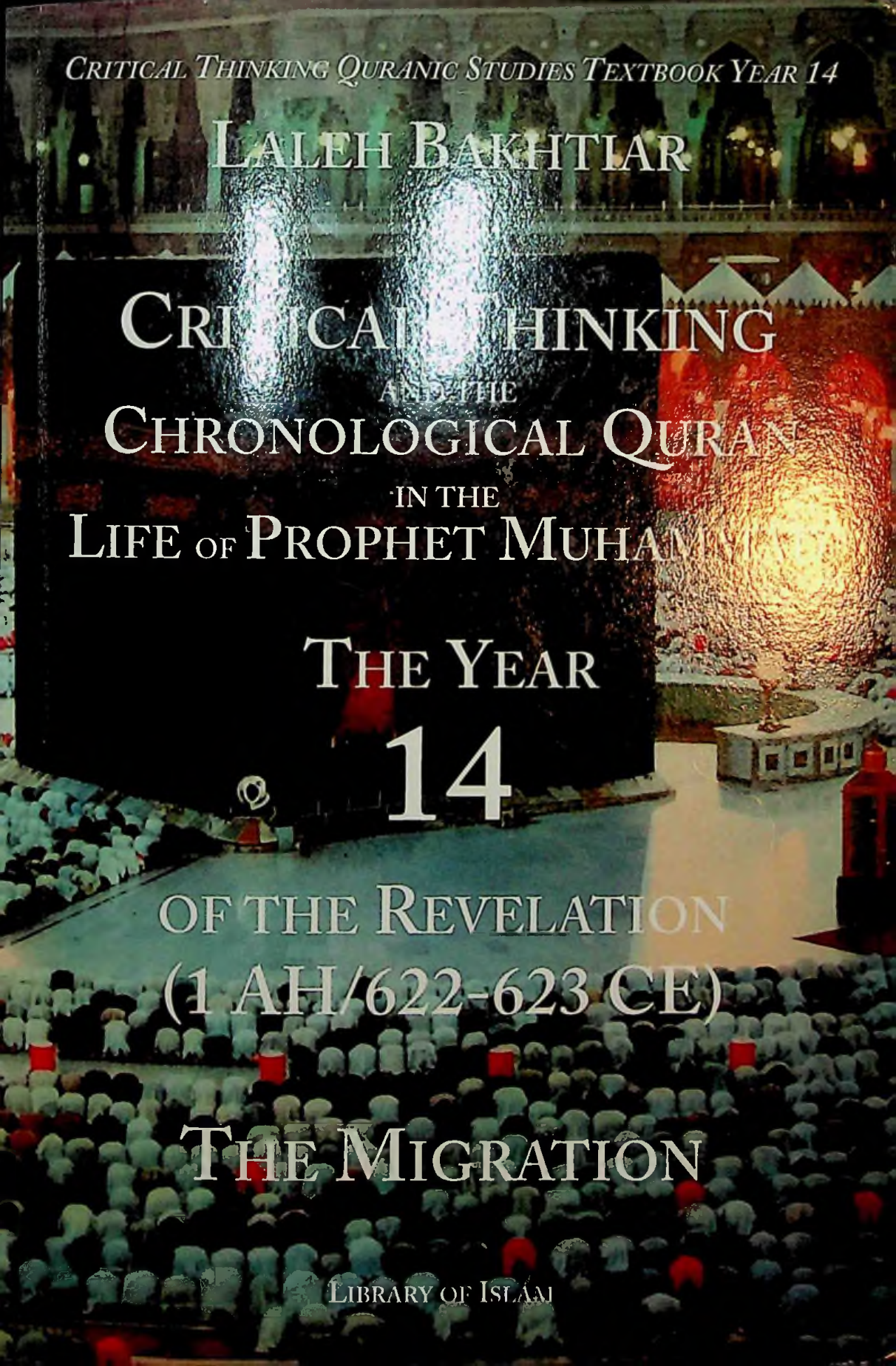
The essential aim of such a religious practice is to revive one's awareness of God and draw closer to Him. If this is disrupted by threats from a hostile quarter, a disabling illness or the like, pilgrims are not deprived of the rewards they would have received had they completed the pilgrimage or the *`umra*. They are, therefore, instructed to proceed with making the offerings as if they had completed the intended rituals. This compassionate attitude is well in line with the spirit of the Quranic message and its view of the purpose of worship.

Then follows another rule relating to the performance of pilgrimage and *umra*. (2:196) This, of course, applies under normal peaceful conditions. Pilgrims are not to shave their head or cut a piece of their hair, which precedes the termination of the state of consecration, or *ihram*, until they have made their offerings at the designated place and time. This is done at Mina on the tenth day of Dhu al-Hijja, after attendance the previous day at the plain of Arafat. Once the offerings are made, pilgrims may release themselves from consecration.

Here we have another exemption: (2:196) The Quranic messag is a practical and humane religion, and if there are grounds of health that would require shaving one's head, one would be permitted to do so while in the state of *ihram*, even before the destination for offering the sacrifice is reached or the appropriate rituals are completed. The concession, however, is balanced with a compensation which has been set as a three-day fast from dawn to dusk, the feeding of six needy people, or slaughtering a sheep and giving its meat to the poor.

The Chapter gives another ruling relating to the pilgrimage and the *umra*: The sacrifice is required of those who are able to complete the rituals of both duties. Let us look at the matter in more detail.

One form of *tamattu*, which is referred to in this sign as: taking advantage of performing both duties of pilgrimage and *umra*, involves the performance of the *umra* separately, prior to performing the pilgrimage. To do this, one sets off for *umra*, goes into *ihram* at the appointed location, performs the rites of *umra*, which include circumambulation (*tawaf*) around the Kabah and running between (*sai*) between Safa and Marwah, and shaving one's head or trimming one's


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hair to release oneself from consecration. One then waits for the time of the pilgrimage to re-enter into *ihram*, or consecration, for the pilgrimage. This is valid only if the *umra* is offered within the appointed months of pilgrimage: Shawwal, Dhu al-Qada and the first ten days of Dhu al-Hijja.

Another form of *tamattu* is when one goes into *ihram*, at the appointed location, with the intention of combining both *umra* and pilgrimage. On arrival in Makkah, the *umra* is performed, after which the pilgrim maintains his *ihram* until he has performed the rest of the rites of the pilgrimage at the proper time.

In both cases, pilgrims are required to make such offerings as they can afford and are available. Animals such as camels, cows, sheep and goats can be offered for this purpose.

Those who lack the means need to fulfil an alternative requirement. (2:196) It is recommended that fasting should be undertaken over the three days before attendance at Arafat on the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja. The other seven days of fasting are undertaken following one's arrival back home, a total of ten days in all, as the Quran clearly points out.

The idea here apparently is to keep the pilgrims' hearts and minds attached to God during the interval between the *umra* and the pilgrimage. The requirement of sacrifice or fasting perhaps aims to maintain the feeling of being closer to God in the period between the *umra* and pilgrimage. Thus, lifting the restrictions of consecration, or *ihram*, after performing the *umra* would not lead people away from the highly spiritual atmosphere that the pilgrimage generates.

Since those who live close to the Sacred Mosque are required to perform the pilgrimage only, and not the *umra*, they cannot have the option of *tamattu*. They have no sacrifice to offer and, consequently, the ruling of fasting ten days instead does not apply to them, either: (2:196)

At this juncture the Chapter draws attention to a vital and fundamental aspect of the human being's relationship with God. It exhorts: (2:196) The requirement for proper observance of these rulings would be an ever-present sense of God-consciousness, and an appreciation of the awesome power of His retribution. By its very nature, *ihram* invokes a high sense of awareness of God and an eagerness not to incur His displeasure, which must be maintained, with equal vigor and sincerity, during the interval when the pilgrims are relieved from the restrictions of *ihram*. Pilgrims are expected to remain vigilant and self-controlled throughout the whole period.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

# Lesson 87(17) Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

**How are developing criteria for evaluating by clarifying values and standards used in the Quran? Criteria Include:**

**Clear evidence:** *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

**Meditation, pondering, considering:** *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

**Recollection:** *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

**Reflection:** *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

**Taking to heart:** *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

**Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises:** *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

**Bringing your proof, showing your evidence:** *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

**People of intellect and reflection:** *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

**Explaining distinctly:** *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

**Being reasonable:** *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are rea-*

*sonable.* **(16:12)**

**Being just and fair:** *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:197-2:210

**Madinah:** *The pilgrimage to Makkah is in known months.*
*And whoever undertook the duty of pilgrimage to Makkah in them,*
*then, there is no sexual intercourse nor disobedience nor dispute*
*during the pilgrimage to Makkah.*
*And whatever good you accomplish, God knows it.*
*And take provision.*
*Then, truly, the best ration is God-consciousness.*
*So be God-conscious, O those imbued with intuition!* (2:197)
*There is no blame on you*
*that you be looking for grace from your Lord.*
*And when you pressed on from Arafat,*
*then remember God at the Sacred Monument.*
*And remember Him as He guided you,*
*although you had been before this,*
*certainly, of the ones who go astray.* (2:198)
*Again, press on from where humanity pressed on, and ask God for forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:199)
*And when you satisfied your devotional acts, then, remember God*
*like your remembrance of your fathers,*
*or a stauncher remembrance. And among humanity are some who*
*say: Our Lord! Give to us in the present! And for him, there is no*

*apportionment in the world to come!* (2:200)
*And among them are some who say:*
*Our Lord! Give us benevolence in the present*
*and benevolence in the world to come*
*and protect us from the punishment of the fire!* (2:201)
*Those, for them is a share of what they earned.*
*And God is Swift at reckoning.* (2:202)
*And remember God during numbered days.*
*So whoever hastened on in two days, then, there is no sin on him.*
*And whoever remained behind, then, there is no sin on him.*
*And for whoever was God-conscious, be God-conscious.*
*And know that to Him you will be assembled.* (2:203)
*And among humanity is one whose sayings impress you*
*about this present life and he calls to God to witness what*
*is in his heart while he is most stubborn in altercation.* (2:204)
*And when he turned away, he hastened about the earth*
*so that he makes corruption in and on it,*
*and he causes the cultivation and stock to perish,*
*but God loves not corruption.* (2:205)
*And when it was said to him: Be God-conscious!*
*Vainglory took him to sin. So hell is enough for him!*
*And, certainly, it will be a miserable Final Place!* (2:206)
*And among humanity is he who sells himself*
*looking for the goodwill of God,*
*and God is Gentle with His servants.* (2:207)
*O those who believed! Enter into peacefulness collectively*
*and follow not the steps of Satan.*
*Truly, he is a clear enemy to you.* (2:208)
*But if you slipped after drew near you the clear portents*
*then, know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:209)
*So do they look on but that God approach them*
*in the overshadowing of cloud shadows? And the angels?*
*The command would be decided.*
*And commands are returned to God.* (2:210)

## COMMENTARY°

### A SYMBOL OF QURANIC UNITY

The Chapter then gives an outline of the rituals of the pilgrimage and the visitation (*umra*). This follows quite naturally from the earlier account dealing with lunar changes and phases, and the admissibility of fighting during the sacred months of the year and in the vicinity of the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. (2:197-2:203)

The Chapter proceeds to give further details of the pilgrimage

rituals. It defines the time of the year in which it is valid and explains further the values to be observed in its performance. Like the preceding passage, it closes with an exhortation to fear God at all times. (2:197)

Having pointed out what should be avoided, the Chapter conveys the reassurance that: (2:197) This would be the greatest incentive for the believer to perform more good deeds, and to have God witness more of his devotion, which is in itself a source of contentment and recompense.

God then calls on the pilgrims to provide for themselves, physically and spiritually, in preparation for the challenging and demanding experience of pilgrimage. Therefore, the emphatic exhortation: (2:197) God-consciousness is a real source of both material and spiritual sustenance. It provides the human mind and body with strength, refinement and physical and moral support. Those with insight and understanding would be the first to appreciate this directive and benefit from divine provision.

The Chapter outlines more pilgrimage rules. It explains that it is permitted for pilgrims to engage in trade or employment during the pilgrimage period. It also adds further elaboration of rituals. (2:198-2:199)

Thus, trading and commercial activity, including letting and leasing, are permitted during pilgrimage. In fact, the Quran describes such activities as a means of seeking God's blessings. Thus, anyone who seeks to earn some income through trade and business in pilgrimage should feel that he only seeks God's bounty and that whatever he receives is given to him by God. It is not his own efforts that give him his earnings. It is God, the generous giver who gives us all we have. Once this is appreciated by the pilgrim, he will realize that even as he is trading, he is in a state of devotion to God which in no way violates or defiles his observance of the pilgrimage duties.

Once this principle is established in believers' hearts and minds, the Quranic message allows them total freedom to pursue their interests, every one of which would in itself be considered a valid act of worship.

It is not by chance, therefore, that a sign dealing with the rituals of pilgrimage should also include instructions on earning through trade and commercial activities. (2:198) Attendance at Arafat is the central duty of the pilgrimage.

The scheduled time for attendance at Arafat begins at noon on the Day of Arafat, the ninth day of the Muslim lunar month of Dhu al-Hijja, and ends at the break of dawn the following morning, the Day of Sacrifice.

## PERFECT DEVOTION AT EVERY MOVE

The Prophet laid down this rule and extended the time to the break of dawn on the Day of Sacrifice, the tenth of Dhu al-Hijja, in order to distinguish Quranic practice from that of the pagan Arabs.

The established tradition adopted by the Prophet was to depart from Arafat after sunset. The Quran exhorts Muslims to invoke God's name following their departure from Arafat. It reminds them that this is part of the guidance God favored them with, and that their actions are an expression of gratitude for that favor. They are also reminded of the gloom and despair that had marked their way of life prior to the Quranic message: Remember Him who has given you guidance. Before this you were certainly in error.

Those early Muslims were fully aware of this profound truth. They were only a few years away from the pagan Arab way of life, with its lamentable religious ignorance and its worship of idols, jinn and angels, who were also conceived to be daughters of God, while the jinn were thought to be His in-laws. Such foolish superstitions had in turn led to confusion in religious practices. These included the unjustified and unexplained prohibition of the meat of certain animals, or the meat from their backs, and the sacrifice of children to idols, gods or jinn.

Pre-Quranic Arab life was plagued with a host of socially unjust and morally corrupt practices. The Chapter points specifically to one of them here, class distinction, by commanding: (2:199)

The Arabs' decadence was also shown in the senseless and bloody tribal conflicts which at the time had totally undermined their position in the world. It was further reflected in the near-total confusion of their sexual mores, marriage customs, and family relationships in general. It was apparent in the injustice inflicted upon the weak by the strong, in the total absence of ethical or legal guarantees to restore the balance. Above all, it was manifested in the Arabs' marginal existence and insignificance on the world stage, which had only begun to be redressed with the advent of Islam.

Returning to the main theme of this passage, one can also describe the pilgrimage as the greatest gathering of Muslims from all over the globe. They are brought together under the single banner of the Quranic message, abandoning all their former racial, cultural and national ties. The unsewn *ihram* garments they don when they are in the state of consecration are symbolic in more senses than one. All pilgrims wearing these garments stand on the same level, with no distinctions of tribal or ethnic kinship. The Quranic message is the only unifying factor.

In pre-Quranic days, the Quraysh used to give themselves cer-

tain privileges to distinguish them from the rest of the Arabs during the pilgrimage. They arrogantly referred to themselves as *al-hums*, or the pure. One such privilege the Quraysh had granted themselves was that they did not attend at Arafat, and so approached Muzdalifah from a different direction to that of other pilgrims. These Quranic instructions eliminated this anomaly and bound the Quraysh to observe the same pilgrimage rituals as the rest of the Muslims, removing all false distinction.

All prejudices and manifestations of pride and vanity must be discarded during the pilgrimage. Pilgrims are instructed to direct their devotion, praise and pleas to God, to pray for forgiveness for their errors and excesses, large and small. They ought to keep their minds, hearts and souls pure of all thoughts of lewdness, transgression, wicked conduct and wrangling of any kind. Through the pilgrimage, Muslims are educated in the wide fundamental principles of Islam: the equality of person and the rejection of discrimination on the basis of caste, race, language, or any other differences. Should they deviate or become negligent, they are urged to seek God's guidance and forgiveness.

### THE JOURNEY APPROACHES ITS END

Human destiny is determined, and his credentials evaluated, according to how close his way of life is to God. (2:200-202) There are two types of people: those who care only for the here and now and devote their energies to nothing else, and those with a wider vision and more far-reaching concerns, who are conscious of God and who seek happiness in this life without forfeiting their share of life to come.

But those who say: (2:201) are assured their full share of happiness and reward. They are polite enough not to specify the type of reward they seek, but will be content with whatever God grants them. His generosity is neither withheld nor delayed. The temperate and reasonable tone of their formal prayer assures them success and a generous response from God Almighty.

The passage on pilgrimage rituals closes with more exhortations to praise God and be conscious of His power: (2:203) These special days are widely believed to be the day of Arafat (the ninth day of Dhu al-Hijja), the day of sacrifice (the tenth day), and the following three days.

The passage ends on a significant note, reminding the believers of the Day of Judgement, to which reference is made in some of the signs on pilgrimage, thus arousing in their hearts a healthy fear of God. *Have fear of God and know well that you shall all be gathered*

*before Him.* (2:203)

The preceding signs demonstrate clearly how Islam transformed the pagan Arab customs of the pilgrimage into a rich and meaningful Quranic ritual, ridding it of all idolatrous, sectarian and exclusive practices. It turned it from a narrow Arab tradition into a truly universal one: a typical Quranic form of worship dedicated to the praise and service of God Almighty. This is yet another example of how the Quranic message can overcome and transcend all differences and distinctions that divide humanity.

### TWO DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE

The passage introduces a person who portrays himself as the epitome of goodness, sincerity, dedication, love, innocence, and undoubted willingness to spread goodness, compassion, happiness, and purity of heart all around him. (2:204) Such people enchant you with their turn of phrase; their tone of sincerity and claims of integrity and righteousness can easily mislead; and, for good measure, they would cite God as witness to what is in their hearts.

In reality, however, such people are *the most stubborn in altercation.* Their hearts are filled with malice and hatred, with no room for love, compassion or tolerance. Such two-faced people are capable of the most vicious lies; they are treacherous and totally dishonest. When put to the test, their true personality is revealed: evil, spiteful, and malevolent.

As they go about their daily work, these people do nothing but spread evil and plunder the material and human resources of society. (2:205) Their actions are a true and accurate reflection of the grudges they harbour and the evil contained inside them. But God is fully aware of the corruption these hypocrites spread in society and throughout the world, and utterly condemns them.

As we read on, more features of this type of people are revealed: (2:206) Intent on pursuing their vile deeds, these people become resistant to advice and reform; if anything, they grow more obstinate and arrogant. They begin to take pride in spreading evil and corruption, with no remorse, sense of guilt or fear of God. The portrait is thus complete. The example is clear, true to life, and instantly recognizable, at any time and in every society.

This snobbery, contention and lack of shame are met with a most swift and appropriate punishment: (2:206) That would be more than sufficient retribution. For hell is the most terrible of all punishments: it is a fire fuelled by men and stones; it consumes everything thrown into it. With unmistakable irony, the sign describes hell as their *resting place*:

By way of contrast, the Chapter presents the other type of human being: (2:207) These people are willing to dedicate their souls and bodies to God Almighty, for nothing in return other than His pleasure. It is a deal they conclude without a moment's hesitation, desiring nothing else but divine blessing and approval.

The Arabic expression used here may be interpreted differently to give the same message. The Arabic term denoting 'sell' is also used to mean 'buy'. Thus such people buy themselves by giving up all the pleasures of this world, dedicating themselves purely to God. They are ready and willing to sacrifice all worldly success and pleasure so that they may be accepted by God and admitted into the divine fold.

We have two contrasting portraits. One is that of the hypocrite, silver-tongued who is essentially brutal, ill-mannered, contentious, and corrupt. The other is that of the true believer whose whole life is dedicated to the service of God, and who has conquered the temptations of life.

These two living portraits, which reveal some extraordinary aspects of the Quranic style, are for us to study and marvel at. We cannot but stand in awe of God's inimitable power of creation, as we learn how not to be taken in by soft-spoken words or false pretenses. We are directed to look deeper into the essence of things, rather than be deceived by outward appearances. The signs also draw our attention to the values and criteria, based on faith in God, which should be used to judge people.

### THE TRUE MEANING OF ISLAM

Against this background, the Chapter addresses the Muslim community, the believers, with a very special and unique instruction: (2:208-209) The call is addressed to the true adherents of Islam, whose faith sets them apart and links them directly to God. The invitation entails, first of all, total submission to God Almighty in all matters, simple or grave. Believers must surrender to God their intentions, actions, desires, and their whole destiny, and accept His judgment without hesitation, and with total trust and self-assurance. They will submit in full certainty and confidence that God will lead them to happiness and self-fulfilment, in both this life and the life to come.

### A CARING AND PEACEFUL SOCIETY

In such a society husbands and wives grow to trust each other, and people feel that their families and their honor are safe and respected. All society is free from stress and anxiety. There are no sala-

cious or lurid temptations that might lead people to violate the moral codes and norms of society. It is a tranquil and peaceful society.

As God calls upon the believers to submit themselves to Him alone, He warns them against following: *Follow not the steps of Satan.* (2:208) There is no third way; it is either God's Guidance or Satan's confusion; either the way of the Quranic message or the way of ignorance and foolishness. A Muslim has to be very clear on this point and permit no doubt or hesitation.

The Chapter goes on to point to the consequences of taking that warning lightly, saying: (2:209) The reminder carries awesome power. Those who disregard God's advice, challenge His power and question the wisdom of His guidance, expose themselves to condemnation and destruction.

At this point the Chapter adopts a different approach to emphasize its previous warnings and speaks in the third person, saying: (2:210) This is an illustration of the unique and effective style of the Quran, which brings to life the scenes it describes, and makes the reader or listener feel, see and hear what is going on as if it were happening now.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?
What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?

#### ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Evaluating Reasoning by:•

- Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
- Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
- Developing criteria for evaluation
- Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
- Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

## Lesson 87(18) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:211-2:216

**Madinah:** *Ask the Children of Jacob*
*how many a sign a clear portent, We gave them.*
*And whoever substitutes the divine blessing of God after it drew*
*near him, then, truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (2:211)
*Made to appear pleasing to those who were ungrateful*
*is this present life, and they deride those who believed.*
*But those who were God-conscious will be above them*
*on the Day of Resurrection.*
*And God provides for whomever He wills*
*without reckoning.* (2:212)
*Humanity had been of one community.*
*Then, God raised up the Prophets,*
*ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.*
*And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth*
*to give judgment among humanity*
*about what they were at variance in it.*
*None were at variance in it but those who were given it*
*after the clear portents drew near them*
*because of their insolence to one another.*
*Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth—*
*about what they were at variance in it— with His permission.*
*And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (2:213)
*Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden*
*while approaches you not the likeness*
*of those who passed away before you?*
*Desolation and tribulation afflicted them.*
*And they are so convulsed that even the Messenger says,*
*and those who believed with him:*
*When will there be help from God?*
*No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near.* (2:214)
*They ask **you** what they should spend.*
*Say: Whatever you spent for good is for*
*the ones who are your parents and the nearest kin and the orphans*
*and the needy and the traveler of the way.*
*And whatever good you accomplish,*
*then, truly, God is Knowing of it.* (2:215)

**See Prelude (2:216)**

## COMMENTARY°

### A QUESTION PUT TO THE CHILDREN OF JACOB

The Chapter then addresses the Prophet Muhammad, ordering him to inquire of the Children of Jacob, described earlier in the Chapter as hesitant in their response to God's call: how many signs they chose to disregard and how they abused the privileges God had bestowed upon them and how much they distorted His Message: (2:211)

The Chapter then contrasts believers and ungrateful, and the difference in their outlook: (2:212) This life, with its transient concerns and ephemeral interests and enjoyments, is all that the ungrateful know and aspire to. They are unable to see beyond the here-and-now; they know of no greater values or aspirations other than those of life on this earth. Consequently, their scope is limited, their vision is blurred, and they are deprived of the higher understanding and greater reward experienced by believers.

Believers should uphold their faith and disregard the mockery and scorn of the ungrateful. They have God's word that they shall occupy a higher position than those ungrateful on the Day of Resurrection, and that shall be the real test and the final judgment. The true measure is that of God who confirms: (2:212)

What God has in store for believers is far better and far more favorable. They shall be rewarded in abundance, according to God's wish and wisdom, either here in this life or in the life to come, for *God provides for whomever He wills without reckoning.* (2:212)

### A SINGLE COMMUNITY AND DIVERGENT VIEWS

With progress and diversity came differences, disagreements and divisions. New beliefs, traditions and ideologies appeared and were accepted in various degrees by various communities. It was then that God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to send forth Prophets to convey the promise of success and to warn against deviation. With the Prophets, God: (2:213)

It is essential that there should be a proper and valid by which differences and divisions may be judged and evaluated. Such a point of reference is alluded to in the Chapter when it says that God: (2:213)

The Chapter goes on to explain why people allowed their whims and prejudices to cause them to neglect God's Book and turn away from the truth and the guidance it had brought them: (2:213) Jealousy, greed, caprice and self-aggrandizement were some of the mo-

tives behind the divisions, disagreements and conflict that have beset humanity throughout history.

No two people could disagree over the veracity and authenticity of God's revelations unless one or both of them are adversely motivated. True believers are in full agreement: (2:213)

### WHEN WILL GOD'S HELP ARRIVE?

Do you reckon that you will enter paradise while you have not suffered like those [believers] who passed away before you? Affliction and adversity befell them, and so terribly shaken were they that the Messenger and the believers with him would exclaim: (2:214)

With these poignant and profound words, and in this direct manner, God addresses the founding community of the Quranic message, drawing their attention to the experiences of their fellow believers before them who were entrusted with the same task of establishing the divine code of living on earth. Nevertheless, the message in these words is timeless. It is directed to all human groups to whom God assigns that honorable task.

### BALANCING KINDNESS AND PERSONAL PREFERENCES

The subject of charity (2:215) had already been dealt with in several Quranic passages that preceded the revelation of the present sign. The circumstances that witnessed the birth of the Quranic message made voluntary financial contributions by Muslims absolutely essential in order for the community to emerge and consolidate its position, considering the great difficulties and threat of war it was facing. It was also essential as an expression of solidarity and cohesion within the community, and to eliminate inequality and reinforce loyalty and self-sufficiency. All these are indispensable qualities for building up a true and practical sense of community among the Muslims.

At this point we are told that some Muslims asked: (2:215) The question is about giving money Muslims may give in charity. The reply speaks of the nature of charitable spending and defines the most important beneficiaries. The phraseology of the answer: *Whatever you spent for good* ... indicates, first of all, that whatever is given in charity is good for the donor, the recipient and the community as a whole. It is good in itself and it is done for good reasons. It also implies that people should give from the best of what they have and share it with others. As well as benefitting the needy, this would purify the donor's heart and soul and give charity and altruism real meaning.

As to whom charity should be directed, the sign explains:

(2:215) The sign gives a list of categories of people brought together through ties of family, kinship, compassion, and an integral strong framework of human social welfare, nurtured and promoted by religious faith.

*God is Knowing of it.* (2:215) God is aware of the deed as well as of the intention behind it. Thus, it will not go to waste. He has taken note of it and, being just, He will give a suitable reward for it.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above sign?
What the assumption of those who say that all disbelievers should be killed?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of one of the Quranic signs.
I was able to analyze my actions today and evaluate them.

## Lesson 87(19) Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

### Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:217-2:221

**Madinah:** *They ask you about the Sacred Month and fighting in it.*
*Say: Fighting in it is deplorable and barring from the way of God*
*and ingratitude to Him. And to bar from the Masjid al-Haram,*
*and expelling people from it are more deplorable with God.*
*And persecution is more deplorable than killing.*
*And they cease not to fight you until they repel you*
*from your way of life, if they are able.*
*And whoever of you goes back on his way of life, then, dies*
*while he is one who is ungrateful, those, their actions were fruitless*
*in the present and in the world to come.*
*And those will be the Companions of the Fire.*
*They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (2:217)
*Truly, those who believed and those who emigrated*

*and struggled in the way of God, those hope for the mercy of God.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:218)
*They ask **you** about intoxicants and gambling.*
*Say: In both of them there is deplorable sin*
*and profits for humanity.*
*And their sin is more deplorable than what is profitable.*
*And they ask **you** how much they should spend.*
*Say: What is extra.*
*Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you*
*so that perhaps you will reflect* (2:219)
*on the present and the world to come.*
*And they ask **you** about orphans.*
*Say: Making things right for them is better.*
*And if you intermix with them, then they are your brothers/sisters.*
*God knows the one who makes corruption*
*from the one who makes things right.*
*And if God willed, He would have overburdened you.*
*Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:220)
*Marry not ones who are female idol worshippers until they believe.*
*The one who is a believing, female bondservant is better than the*
*one who is a female idol worshipper even if she impressed you*
*and wed not the ones who are male idol worshippers*
*until they believe.*
*And one who is a believing, male bondservant is better than the*
*one who is a male idol worshipper even if he impressed you.*
*Those call you to the fire while God calls you to the Garden*
*and to forgiveness with His permission.*
*And He makes manifest His signs to humanity*
*so that perhaps they will recollect.* (2:221)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE ULTIMATE AIM OF THE ENEMIES OF THE QURANIC MESSAGE

The sign states, in no uncertain terms, how determined the ungrateful are in pursuing their goal of destroying the Muslims' faith, saying: (2:217) Above all, there is God's grace and mercy, reserved for those who struggle for His cause. No one with true faith can ever despair of God's mercy: (2:218) As long as a believer continues to trust in God's grace, he shall never be disappointed. Those early Muslims from Makkah, who had given up everything for their faith, lived up to their belief, strove hard, and received the appropriate rewards. They deservedly won God's forgiveness and mercy, pointing the way to those who would come after them.

## THE QURANIC METHOD OF EDUCATION

The Chapter goes on to give the Islamic rulings on drinking and gambling, two of the most popular indulgences among the Arabs at the time, who had little else of importance to occupy their minds or their time:

They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. (2:219) Prior to the revelation of this sign, drinking and gambling were tolerated but never condoned. We do not have a single statement in the Quran which may be construed as making them permissible. God, however, carefully charted the way He wanted the newly born Muslim community to take, marking it step by step, so that it would he able to fulfil the role He has assigned to it. The time had to come when such wasteful pastimes would be condemned and rooted out of the Muslim community whose role in the life and history of humanity demanded the dedication and full conscious participation of everyone in that community. Unlike godless societies, past, present and future, a Muslim community has no room for escapism or excessive diversions. The Quranic approach in banning these practices was measured and deliberate.

This statement was the first step towards a universal ban on drinking and gambling in Muslim society. While good and evil could often intermingle and be confused with one another, making it impossible in the human world for things to be purely good or purely evil, the main criteria for whether something could be permissible or prohibited is the preponderance of good or evil associated with it. This statement is a good example of the judicious Quranic approach discernible in many Islamic legal and practical rulings and teachings.

We often find that in matters of faith or abstract belief, the Quranic message gives specific and definite pronouncements, but when it comes to matters of tradition or complex social practices, it takes a more pragmatic and measured approach, preparing the ground for smoother adoption and implementation.

Drinking and gambling are well-entrenched social habits that require careful treatment. The first step was to raise in people's minds an inner consciousness of their harmful effects, advising that they would be better avoided. The second step came later on, which directed Muslims: *O those who have believed! Come not near the formal prayer while you are intoxicated...* (4:43)

The third and final step in banning drinking came in the sign which says: *O those who have believed! Indeed intoxicants and gambling and fetishes and divining arrows are of the disgraceful actions of Satan. Then avoid them...* (5:90)

## DEALING WITH SLAVERY

At the advent of the Quranic message, slavery was an established social and economic practice known all over the world. Any movement towards the abolition of making POWs into slaves would require radical social change and far-reaching economic reforms and adjustments, as well as international treaties and conventions to govern the treatment of POWs. The Quranic message never condoned slavery. There is not a single statement in the Quran that recommends or approves of slavery or the enslavement of war prisoners.

Apart from war captives and children of POWs who were made slaves, the Quranic message opted for eliminating the root causes and drying up the sources of slavery, with an overriding objective to avoid social upheaval, and it strove to provide the basic guarantees of a decent living and dignity for freed POWs.

As for war captives, the Quranic message could not unilaterally forgo enslaving POWs since non-Muslim states continued to do so with Muslim prisoners in times of war. Were it to do so, it would have immediately put the Muslims at a disadvantage vis-a-vis their enemies. If any Muslim soldiers were taken prisoners, they would be certain to be made slaves, while prisoners taken by Muslims would remain free.

On the other hand, were the Quranic message to require that children born in slavery be immediately freed before creating the right social and economic environment that would absorb them as free citizens, they would have been left stranded, thrown into society with no means of living or welfare. They would have had no family to protect them against descending into poverty or moral delinquency.

Taking the well-entrenched social conditions into account and while not banning the enslavement of war captives, the Quran did not specifically order that they should be held in bondage. Instead, the Quran advises the Muslims: *So when you have met those who were ungrateful, then strike their thick necks until you have given them a sound thrashing. Then tie them fast with restraints and afterwards either have good will towards them or take ranson for them until the war ends laying down its heavy load....* (47:4) This gave the Muslim authorities the choice to deal with war captives according to the prevailing circumstances and the nature of the conflict and the enemy they were facing. War captives could be released, exchanged or, if necessary, held in bondage.

Other ways of enslavement, and they were many, were totally banned. That was sure to minimize the number of POW/slaves in society. The Quranic message began by integrating those POW/slaves

as soon as they joined the Muslim community. It gave them the full right to buy their freedom through an agreement a POW would make with his master, who may not refuse him such a deal.

Once an agreement of this sort is made, a POW has the right to work, own property, earn an independent income, and seek employment with other employers, in order to be able to raise the money to secure his freedom. That made it possible for POWs to gradually acquire an independent status in society and enjoy all the basic citizenship rights of the community, and they would become eligible for state welfare aid, which consists mainly of *zakat* revenue.

Furthermore, the Quranic Message urged its followers to help POWs financially to secure their freedom and incorporated the freeing of POWs into the legal code as a form of atonement for certain offenses including manslaughter, reneging on an oath, and the ancient Arabian practice of a husband banishing his wife and saying that he considers her, for marital purposes, like his mother.

The subsequent proliferation of non-POW/slavery in Muslim societies had come about as a result of a gradual decline of the authority of Islam. This is a historical fact for which Islam may not be blamed. Islam cannot be held responsible for its incorrect implementation in certain periods or societies. Islam was, and remains, unchanged, but what had changed was people's understanding of it an the way they translated its principles into social reality, which was often an aberration and a travesty of Islam for which it cannot be held accountable.

Any revival of the life of Quranic message should, therefore, start from the authentic and established sources and principles of Islam and not be a continuation of a certain distorted historical legacy. This is an essential truth, both in abstract as well as practical terms, that cannot be overemphasized. Grossly mistaken conclusions are made regarding the Islamic view of history and on understanding the historic reality of Islam and how it operates in society. The leading culprits in this field are the so-called Orientalists, or Western scholars of Islam, and their students, including some sincere but very naive Muslim scholars who were misled by them.

### MORE QUESTIONS BY BELIEVERS

The Chapter continues, answering other questions and laying down more fundamental Quranic principles. (2:219-220) The answer given to this question the first time round, in (2:215), identified what could be given in charity and to whom, and here it identifies quantities. Anything above one's basic reasonable personal needs should be considered available for donation to others, starting with those el-

igible among one's nearest of kin, as already pointed out.

The present statement implies that the obligatory *zakat* is not by itself sufficient as a means of wealth distribution, and this ruling, in my view, has not been overruled by the imposition of *zakat*. Payment of *zakat* by those liable to it does not exempt them from making additional donations and contributions to good causes. *Zakat* is a duty levied by the ruling Muslim authority for allocation to the various causes specified in the Quran: *Charities are only for the poor and the needy and the ones who work to collect it and for those whose hearts were brought together and to free the bondservant* (POW) *and the ones who are in debt and in the way of God and for the traveler of the way* ... (9:60), beyond which Muslims continue to have an obligation towards God and fellow-Muslims in society. It may not exhaust one's ability to give, or one's desire to gain further blessings and pleasure from God Almighty.

Muslims are then reminded: (2:219-220) It would not suffice to consider only the realities of this life, which represents the more immediate and shorter part of the whole picture of human existence and all the responsibilities and relationships associated with it. That would only give a distorted understanding of the values and the criteria upon which life is built which would bring about the wrong kind of human behavior.

The distribution and allocation of wealth, in particular, calls for total awareness of accountability in this life and in the life to come. One is always substantially rewarded, spiritually and morally, for what one gives in charity. Further reward comes in the contribution one makes to the welfare and well-being of society. These rewards may not, however, be readily apparent to everyone, which makes the rewards of the hereafter even more of an incentive to give generously and willingly and away from ostentation and pomposity.

### TREATMENT OF ORPHANS

The Chapter then raises the question of how orphans ought to be treated: (2:220) Social welfare is the bedrock of Muslim society which has a responsibility to care for the weaker among its members and protect their interests. Having lost either or both of their parents at a young age, orphan children would come at the top of the list of social groups that deserve care and protection. Some guardians of orphan children used to incorporate any possessions or wealth those children might have inherited into their own, for trading or other purposes, which did not always work in the children's favor. As the Quran denounced such actions, some conscientious people began to feel guilty and went too far the other way in caring for orphans, to

the extent that they separated their own food from that of the orphans in their care. This led to subsequent revelations being sent down to moderate the situation and put the whole issue in a proper perspective. Muslims were urged to do what would he in the best interest of the orphan children they were caring for. Being members of the larger family of Islam, orphans should be treated in a spirit of fraternity and brotherhood. God is the judge of people's motives and intentions. He recognizes those who are genuine and, being all-powerful and compassionate, He does not wish to overburden them.

The Quran refers all actions ultimately to God. Faith and life revolve on the central pivot of belief in God. It is notable that the Quranic teachings and precepts are based on an inner conscious conviction that acts as a solid guarantee for their success and effectiveness.

### MARRIAGE TO UNBELIEVERS

Marriage is the deepest and most enduring bond that can exist between two human beings. (2:221) It calls for the widest possible range of mutual and intimate responses and, therefore, requires the most firm emotional commitment that can be made. For this to be achieved, a clear common objective must exist between the two parties, and what is better than religious faith to provide such affinity and unity of purpose. This profound influence of religion on human thought has often been ignored or overlooked and some societies have made the mistake of trying to replace religious faith with one social philosophy or another.

During the early days of Islam in Makkah, although the Muslims had succeeded in detaching themselves spiritually and ideologically from the rest of society, it was not possible for them to totally disengage themselves socially. This transformation required time and a measured pace of change. In Madinah, however, where Muslims were to acquire an independent social as well as religious identity, the new social order rapidly began to take shape, with these Quranic signs prohibiting any new marriage of Muslims and idol worshippers. Existing marriages remained valid, however, when signs 60:9-60:10 were revealed these marriages were annulled.

From then on, marriages involving Muslims and idol worshippers were prohibited, as such unions were considered devoid of spiritual meaning and non-deserving of God's blessings or consecration, since the parties involved did not share the same beliefs and outlook on life. Having honored humanity, God does not want marriage to be based on mere physical attraction. It is a bond that is closely related to the divine system for human life.

Therefore, we have a clear, definitive injunction: (2:221) Were the ungrateful woman to embrace the faith, the barrier would be removed and the hearts of the two people concerned would fall into harmony and could be united in marriage as they are united in belief. (2:221) Such attraction would normally be physical, rather than spiritual, and therefore superficial. It is the attraction of the soul that really matters, even if the Muslim girl is a POW, because it would be infinitely more enduring and profound. (2:221) The same rule applies to Muslim women who wish to marry idol worshipping men, and for the same underlying reason: (2:221)

It is noteworthy that Muslim men are not prohibited from marrying Christian or Jewish women, despite certain important differences in religious belief and practice. This is because Muslims, Christians and Jews share a fundamental belief in God's Oneness. *Today what is good is permitted to you. The food of those who were given the Book is allowed to you and your food is allowed to them. And the ones who are free, chaste females from among the ones who are female believers and the ones who are free, chaste females from among those who have been given the Book before you. When you have given them their bridal due as ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious, nor as ones who have taken lovers to themselves* ... (5:5)

Muslim women, however, are forbidden from marrying Jewish or Christian men. The two cases are different, meriting different verdicts. Under Islamic law, children are called by their father's names. It was the practice in all societies that, after marriage, a woman would join the household of her husband. If a Muslim person married a Christian or Jewish woman, she would move to the town or country where he lived, and join the rest of his family, and their children would take the father's name and grow up in his religious and cultural environment. The situation would be reversed in the case of a Muslim woman marrying a Jewish or Christian man, where the children would be raised in a non-Muslim culture and most likely grow up to be non-Muslims.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

## LESSON 87(20) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:222-2:228

**Madinah:** *They ask you about menstruation.*
*Say: It is an impurity, so withdraw from your wives*
*during menstruation.*
*Come not near them (f) until they cleanse themselves.*
*And then when they (f) cleansed themselves, approach them (f)*
*as God commanded you. Truly, God loves the contrite*
*and He loves the ones who cleanse themselves.* (2:222)
*Your wives are a place of cultivation for you, so approach your*
*cultivation whenever you willed and put forward for yourselves.*
*And be God-conscious.*
*And know that you will be one who encounters Him.*
*And give you good tidings to the ones who believe.* (2:223)
*And make God not an obstacle with your sworn oaths*
*to your being good, and being God-conscious,*
*and making things right among humanity.*
*And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:224)
*God will not take you to task for idle talk in your sworn oaths.*
*Rather, He will take you to task for what your hearts earned.*
*And God is Forgiving, Forbearing.* (2:225)
*For those who vow abstinence from their wives, await four months.*
*Then, if they changed their minds,*
*then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (2:226)
*And if they resolved on setting them (f) free,*
*then, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:227
*And the women who are to be divorced will await by themselves*
*three menstrual periods. And it is not lawful for them (f) that they*
*(f) keep back what God created in their (f) wombs, if they (f) had*
*been believing in God, and the Last Day. Their husbands have bet-*
*ter right to come back during that period if they (m) wanted to*
*make things right. For the rights of them (f) in regard to their hus-*
*bands is the like of rights of their (f) husbands in regard to them*
*(f), as one who is honorable.*
*And men have a degree over them (f).*
*And God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:228)

## COMMENTARY°

### PURITY IN SEXUAL RELATIONS

They ask you about menstruation. (2:222-223) Within marriage, sex is not an end in itself, but a means to achieving much more profound goals in life, not least of which is reproduction and the continuation of human life. While it may satisfy the physical desire, sex during menstruation is not only unclean and carries health risks for both person and woman, but also fails to serve its fundamental objective. As a matter of fact, sex during menstruation is not very attractive to normal healthy people because it is not conducive to reproduction. Sound human nature tends to avoid it. (2:222)

However, that is not the end of the matter. Sexual behavior outside the menstruation period must conform to certain manners and standards of decency and propriety: (2:222) Here the Chapter points out that sexual intercourse is allowed only at the place where fertilization may take place. The immediate physical pleasure is not the only purpose of sexual intercourse; its higher purpose is the continuity of human life. God points out what He has made lawful, and a Muslim seeks what is lawful. Moreover, God's laws are meant to purify His servants. Therefore, the statement: (2:222)

The Chapter then defines this aspect of the marital relationship in the most poignant and affectionate terms, saying: (2:223) There can hardly be a more accurate and eloquent description of the nature and purpose of this aspect of the relationship between husband and wife. It is by no means a complete description of the marital relationship.

Sexual fulfilment must, therefore, be sought as part of an overall objective which serves to please God Almighty, and is beneficial to the individuals concerned. They will be further rewarded by God for respecting His teachings and abiding by them.

### OATHS AND ATONEMENTS

The Chapter then moves on to the subject of renouncing wives on oath and abstaining from sexual contact with them as a form of punishment. By way of introduction, it begins with talking about oaths in general, saying: (2:224-227)

God is even more gracious in offering this concession not only for inadvertent vows that need no atonement, but also for vows made in earnest and with full intention. The Prophet was reported to have often overlooked off-hand or casual vows made out of habit or in the heat of the moment. Premeditated vows must be revoked and atoned for, if keeping them results in, or leads to, something evil, harmful or inequitable.

The Chapter emphasizes that God knows all and hears all, and that He is forgiving and lenient, in order to establish in people's minds the fact that these matters are ultimately referred to God Almighty for judgement, and to urge them to be conscious of Him and seek His pleasure and grace in all such matters.

Having established the general rule with respect to vows, the Chapter goes on to deal with the specific vows by husbands to abstain from sexual contact with their wives, either indefinitely or for a specified but long period of time: (2:226-2:227)

### RULES OF DIVORCE

Having reached in the previous sign a point when divorce becomes a possibility, the Chapter goes on to outline in some detail the rules governing divorce and all matters relating to it, such as the waiting period and maintenance: (2:228)

The three monthly courses referred to here are variously understood as three menstrual periods, or three periods of cleanliness from menstruation. The idea is that a divorced woman should not seek another marriage within that period.

The waiting period acts as a period of grace during which the estranged couple can test their feelings and emotions. They may still have feelings for each other, and their mutual compassion might have been overshadowed by a temporary moment of heated emotions, or a misunderstanding, or personal pride. Once tempers are cooled and fury gives way to common sense, the couple might reconsider their situation and decide that it would be more sensible to forget their disagreement and resume their life together.

Divorce is the least preferable solution in God's eyes; it should only be used as a last resort, when all else has failed. Elsewhere, the Quran urges that divorce must be preceded by attempts at reconciliation and that it must not take place during the menstrual period. It is only possible in a period of cleanliness from menstruation during which no sexual intercourse has taken place between the divorcing couples. This gives yet more time for reflection and reconsideration.

When a first divorce between a married couple is initiated, the waiting period acts as a test for their feelings, and if they discover during this time that reconciliation is possible, that option is available to them. As the Chapter says: (2:228) The condition here is that, in coming back together again, the couple should be seriously seeking reconciliation. The aim should never be to undermine the wife's right to marry someone else or put any pressure on her to resume an unhappy relationship.

The divorced woman (2:228) is required to wait for a certain pe-

riod before she can marry someone else, and is obliged to declare whether she is carrying a baby by her divorced husband. The husband is equally required to show good faith if he wishes to take her back, making sure that he intends to cause her no harm. He is further obliged, as we shall see later, to provide maintenance for his divorced wife during the waiting period.

The Chapter goes on to say: (2:228) This advantage, in my view, is in no way absolute but is contingent, within the present context, upon the fact that it is the person who initiates the divorce and would, therefore, have the prerogative to take his wife back, a decision that could not be left to her to take. This advantage, indeed a useful and proper one, is by no means universal, as some have erroneously concluded, but is simply dictated by the nature and the circumstances of the dispute.

### FAIR AND BALANCED DIVORCE SYSTEMS

The Chapter says: (2:229) Couples are allowed to divorce and revoke their divorce twice before the condition stated in the next sign applies. Under this provision, remarriage with a three-times divorced wife cannot take place except in the case when she legally marries another husband who may subsequently, and in the normal course of events, divorce her. Should this take place normally, without it being pre-arranged, the woman and her first husband may be re-married, if they believe that by now they are able to make their marriage successful.

The background to this ruling is that in pre-Quranic Arabia no limitation was set on the number of times divorce could take place. Men would marry, divorce and remarry the same woman, virtually at will. When a person from Madinah had fallen out with his wife and grew to dislike her intensely, he vowed that he would neither keep her nor let her go; he would divorce her and then take her back just before her waiting period had elapsed. The woman complained to the Prophet Muhammad, to whom this sign was then revealed.

This is another example of the prudent and propitious method the Quran had adopted in providing the Muslims with the rulings and directions they needed to organize their community. This approach continued throughout the period of the revelation of the Quran until all the main provisions of the Quranic code were fully laid down, enabling succeeding generations of Muslims to live by their guidance and principles.

Limiting the number of times divorce can be revoked prevents its abuse. The first time a person divorces his wife he would be entitled, without the need for any formalities, to take her back anytime

during her waiting period. If this period elapses, the divorce would become final and a fresh marriage contract, with a fresh dowry, would have to be entered into. In both cases, the husband is allowed one additional divorce if matters again go wrong. The third time a divorce takes place, it is final and irrevocable. The only way a three-times divorced couple could resume a married relationship would be if the ex-wife married a different person who subsequently dies or, in the normal course of events, divorces her and she completes her waiting period without the marriage being re-instated.

The first divorce, as we said earlier, would put the whole relationship to the test, the second one would provide a second and final chance to reassess the situation before judging whether it is irreconcilable. If the marriage could be saved, well and good. A third divorce would, however, be evidence of a total breakdown of the relationship, and that the marriage was unworkable.

In any case, divorce should only be a last resort option to remedy a situation which could not otherwise be saved. Once divorce takes place twice, it would only be fair to either maintain the relationship with honor and dignity and resume as happy a life as possible, or to amicably bring it to an end without pain or acrimony. This would be the third divorce, after which both person and woman are free to start afresh with a different spouse. This is an extremely realistic approach, providing practical solutions. It neither denies the problem nor condemns it, nor attempts to re-create human nature to suit it, nor, indeed, does it ignore the problem altogether or try to sweep it under the carpet.

If the marriage proved unsustainable, the woman would be entitled to everything that had come to be hers during the marriage including the dowry. She would not have to reimburse the person for any upkeep or other costs he had incurred, unless it was her decision to end the marriage, for reasons of her own which had convinced her that life with that particular husband was no longer tolerable or would drive her to transgress the limits of decency, with herself or in her relationship with her husband. In this case the woman may ask for a divorce but would be obliged to compensate the person for the break-up of his marriage home, through no fault of his own, by giving him back the dowry he had paid her, or reimbursing him for all or some of the costs he had incurred while keeping her and enabling her to preserve her honor and dignity.

These realistic and scrupulous measures take account of all possible situations and feelings, ensuring that a wife will never have to accept an unhappy marriage under duress, and that a husband does not forgo any of his rights if his marriage breaks up through no fault of his own.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one of the signs in this section based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

The commentary in this section gives clear reasons and evaluates the reasons for the various types of divorce. It helped me learn how to reason and evaluate other issues.

## LESSON 87(21) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or ego-centric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty,*

*Great.* (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

## QURANIC SIGNS 2:229-2:231

**Madinah:** *Setting free is said two times: Then, hold fast to them (f) as one who is honorable or setting them (f) free with kindness. And it is not lawful for you that you take anything of what you gave them (f) unless they both fear that they both will not perform the ordinances of God. And if you feared that they both will not perform the ordinances of God, then, there is no blame on either of them in what she offered as redemption for that. These are the ordinances of God, so exceed not the limits. And whoever violates the ordinances of God, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (2:229)

*And if he divorced her finally, then, she is not lawful to him after that until she marries a spouse other than him. Then, if that husband divorced her irrevocably, there is no blame on either of them if they return to one another if both of them*

*thought that they will perform within the ordinances of God,*
*and these are the ordinances of God.*
*He makes them manifest for a folk who know.* (2:230)
*And when you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term,*
*then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f)*
*free as one who is honorable.*
*But hold them (f) not back by injuring them*
*so that you commit aggression.*
*And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself.*
*And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery.*
*Remember the divine blessing of God on you,*
*and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom.*
*He admonishes you with it.*
*And be God-conscious of God*
*and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter continues, giving more rulings relating to divorce: (2:230) If a third divorce takes place in a marriage, it could only be a sign of serious and irreversible deterioration within that relationship. The best solution in this case would be permanent separation, and for each partner to seek happiness with someone else. However, if any or all of the three divorces were pronounced by the person lightly, or out of spite, or in the heat of the moment, here again, a drastic measure must be taken to prevent men abusing their divorce privilege. Such s an unhappy relationship should not be perpetuated, since the person has no appreciation for it, nor is he keen to protect it.

If, after the third divorce, the woman marries someone else and this marriage is then terminated in the normal course of events by divorce or by the husband's death, she may be reunited with the first husband as long as: (2:230) This indicates very clearly that the matter is not left to the couple to decide as they please, but it is regulated by terms and conditions set out by God for a proper social order that conforms to His will. These terms and conditions are fully expounded in the Quran for all who are capable of learning and understanding.

### KINDLY RETENTION OR AMICABLE SEPARATION

Having detailed the divorce procedure, the section goes on to give directions to divorcing couples, urging them to show kindness, compassion and consideration during the post-divorce period, regardless of how the rift came about: (2:231-2:232)

In pre-Quranic society, women faced a great deal of oppression and abuse. Female infanticide was widespread in Arabia, and those who survived would suffer cruelty and degradation throughout their lives. Women were bought and sold like animals; mares and she-camels were sometimes considered more precious! They would suffer when they were married; and they received grossly unfair treatment when divorced. Divorced women were not allowed to remarry without their former husband's permission, nor were they allowed by their families to return to their husbands if they wished to be reconciled. Generally, women were looked down upon in Arabia, as indeed in other societies.

When the Quranic message came, it brought fresh principles and values that recognized women and afforded them a status comparable to that of men. It elevated marriage to a religious duty, preserved women's human dignity, and established for them specific rights when they were married and when they were divorced.

Thus, as the end of the waiting period approaches, a husband should either take his wife back into the marriage, with no ill-feelings and with a sincere intention to treat her kindly and sympathetically; or allow the waiting period to elapse and the divorce to take effect without causing any harm or injustice to the divorced wife or demanding any compensation from her.

To emphasize this further and purge men's hearts of evil and selfishness, the Quran appeals to the noblest of feelings and to the human being's sense of shame and honor and fear of God: (2:231)

Keeping a wife against her will, or mistreating her, would be akin to harming oneself, because she is a fellow human being, with dignity and feelings. A person would be doing himself injustice, too, by allowing himself to act in defiance of God's guidance and teachings.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?
When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement ar specify points of dispute or contradiction.

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

## LESSON 87(22) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms of similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be God-conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:232-2:235

**Madinah:** *And when you revocably divorced wives,*
*and they reached their (f) term, then, place not difficulties for them*
*(f) that they (f) re-marry their former spouses when they agreed*
*among themselves as one who is honorable.*
*This is admonished for him—whoever had been among you who*
*believes in God and the Last Day—*
*that is pure and purer for you.*
*And God knows and you know not.* (2:232)
*And the ones who are mothers will breast feed their (f) children for*
*two years completely for whoever wanted to fulfill breast feeding.*
*And on one to whom a child is born is their (f) provision and their*
*clothing (f) as one who is honorable.*
*No soul is placed with a burden, but to its capacity.*
*Neither the one who is a mother be pressed for her child,*
*nor the one to whom a child is born for his child.*
*And on one who inherits is the like of that.*
*While if they both wanted weaning by them agreeing together*
*and after consultation, then, there is no blame on either of them.*

*And if you wanted to seek wet-nursing for your children, then, there is no blame on you when you handed over what you gave as one who is honorable. And be God-conscious. And know that God is Seeing of what you do.* (2:233)

*And those of you whom death will call to itself, forsaking spouses, they (f) will await by themselves (f) four months and ten days. And when they (f) reached their term, then, there is no blame on you in what they (f) accomplished for themselves (f), as one who is honorable. God is Aware of what you do.* (2:234)

*And there is no blame on you in what you offered with it of a proposal to women, or for what you hid in yourselves. God knew that you will remember them (f), except appoint not with them (f) secretly, unless you say a saying as one who is honorable. And resolve not on the knot of marriage until she reaches her prescribed term. And know that God knows what is within yourselves. So be fearful of Him. And know that God is Forgiving, Forbearing.* (2:235)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter directs Muslims not to stand in the way of an estranged wife, whose waiting period has elapsed, if she wants to remarry her divorced husband and they have come to an amicable and honorable agreement to do so: (2:232)

### CHILD CARE IN BROKEN HOMES

The following ruling concerns the fostering and breast-feeding of infants after divorce. When a marriage breaks up, certain ties, commitments and relationships continue to exist between the divorced couple, foremost among which is the well-being and upbringing of children. The Chapter covers all possible eventualities: (2:233)

A divorced mother continues to have a God-given duty towards her infant, no matter how acrimonious the separation from her husband. God's mercy and compassion dictate that under no circumstances should the children be made to suffer, especially during the early years of life when they are still being breast-fed. Modern scientific research has shown that the mother's milk is essential for the first two years of life for the healthy physical and psychological development of the child. humanity needed to know this important fact and hence God, out of His infinite mercy, revealed it in the Quran more than fourteen centuries ago.

In return, the mother has secured the right that the father must provide for her maintenance with fairness and good-will, as partners in their responsibility towards the infant and within their respective means.

The child should not be used by either parent as a pretext to put pressure on the other: (2:233) Neither parent should resort to emotional blackmail or coercion to extort concessions from the other. Were the child's father to die. The father's heir takes over the responsibility to provide for the suckling mother in a fair manner. This is a case where gains and liabilities are shared within the family: the heir receives his share of inheritance and discharges the liabilities of the deceased. It is essential that this right of the mother, and that of her child, is respected and fulfilled in all situations.

If, for health or other reasons, the parents, or the mother and the father's heir, jointly decide that it would be in the child's interest to take him or her off his mother's milk before he or she has reached two years of age, they shall have the right to do so, provided they have had sufficient consultation over the matter, and act in the child's interest.

Similarly, if the father chooses to have the baby suckled by someone other than the natural mother, and can show the distinct advantage of such action, he may do so provided that he ensures that the suckling mother receives her wages. This ensures that the wet nurse would take good care of the child.

The sign closes with yet further exhortation to all concerned to fear God and take account of His presence and overall authority. This, above all else, is a firm guarantee of proper and fair conduct by all.

### THE CASE OF WIDOWS

The Chapter then turns to introduce the rules governing widows, their waiting period and whether and when they can entertain new proposals for marriage: (2:234-2:235)

In pre-Quranic Arabia, widows suffered a great deal of injustice at the hands of their own families, their in-laws and society in general. When a husband died, his widow would be confined to a drab part of the home and made to wear her shabbiest clothes and refrain from using any perfume or incense for a whole year. At the end of that period, she would be required to perform a series of degrading and meaningless rituals which included casting animal faeces into the air and riding an ass or a sheep through the town or village. The Quranic message did away with all those worthless customs and alleviated the suffering of widows who, in addition to the grief of losing their husbands, had to endure the humiliation and persecution of their families and were deprived of the opportunity to resume a happy and decent family life.

The Quranic message set a waiting period of four months and

ten days, which is slightly longer than that for a divorced wife, unless a woman is pregnant, in which case her waiting period extends until she has delivered. The purpose of the waiting period is to determine whether the woman is pregnant and to avoid hurting the feelings of the family of her deceased husband by leaving his home immediately after his death. Once the waiting period is over, no one, from either her family or that of her deceased husband, has the right to dictate to her what to do with her life. She is totally free to decide for herself within the established traditions and teachings of the Quranic message. She is free to wear all the adornments permitted for Muslim women, to receive marriage proposals, and to give her consent to marrying anyone she chooses, unimpeded by any antiquated or unreasonable traditions or customs. She has only God to please and fear.

As for men who wish to marry a widow before the end of her waiting period, the Chapter gives a most perceptive ruling, based on the observance of principles of decency and propriety, ethical and social values, and the feelings and sensibilities of all concerned while taking account of the overall needs and interests of the community as a whole: (2:235)

The Chapter also makes it clear that God is always aware of any unexpressed feelings or intentions by some men in wishing to marry a certain widow. It casts no aspersions on such feelings, which it implicitly recognizes as natural and normal, but urges that no practical steps be taken, or secretive arrangements agreed, before the waiting period is over. Thus, the Quranic message regulates and tames human natural desires rather than condemning or suppressing them. (2:235)

None of this should prevent a decent contact with the woman, provided the subject of conversation falls within the decent religious and social norms as dictated by the Quranic message. No intention of marriage is expressed directly lest the woman's feelings are hurt at such a delicate time in her predicament, as pointed out earlier. (2:235) Once again we note the delicate touches with which the Quran approaches sensitive subjects. It does not warn against making marriage contracts before the end of the waiting period; it warns against making a commitment.

The choice of words at the end of the sign is significant: (2:235) These closing words refer the whole matter to God's grace and generosity, appealing directly to Muslims' respect and fear of God Almighty in conducting their personal and social affairs. This fear and respect are, in themselves, the ultimate guarantee of God's forgiveness and tolerance towards those who earnestly and sincerely strive to observe and implement His directives and rulings.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.

# LESSON 87(23) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS

### THE MIDDLE COMMUNITY
### ISLAMIC MODERATION[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of the Quranic message that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of the Quranic message, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable issues of the Quranic message include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable issues of the Quranic message include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of the Quranic message set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:236-2:242

**Madinah:** *There is no blame on you if you divorced wives whom you touch not, nor undertake a duty to them (f) of a dowry portion. And make provision for them (f). For the one who is wealthy—according to his means—and for the one who is needy —according to his means—with a sustenance, one that is honorable, an obligation on the ones who are doers of good.* (2:236)

*And if you divorced them (f) before you touch them (f),*
*and you undertook the duty of a dowry portion for them (f),*
*then, half of what you undertook as a duty unless they (f) pardon it*
*or they (m) pardon it in whose hand is the marriage knot.*
*And that they (m) pardon is nearer to God-consciousness.*
*Forget not grace among you.*
*Truly, God is Seeing of what you do.* (2:237)
*Be watchful of the formal prayers and the middle formal prayer.*
*Stand up as ones who are morally obligated to God.* (2:238)
*And if you feared, then, pray on foot or as one who is mounted.*
*And when you were safe, then, remember God,*
*for He taught you what you be not knowing.* (2:239)
*And those whom death will call to itself forsaking spouses,*
*will bequeath for their spouses sustenance for a year*
*without expelling them (f). But if they (f) went forth themselves (f),*
*then, there is no blame on you in what they (f) accomplished*
*for themselves (f) as one who is honorable.*
*And God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:240)
*And for ones who are divorced females,*
*sustenance, as one who is honorable.*
*This is an obligation on the ones who are God-conscious.* (2:241)
*Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you*
*so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (2:242)

## COMMENTARY°

### KINDNESS AFTER DIVORCE

The Chapter then tackles a different, but frequently met, situation, in which a woman is divorced before the consummation of the marriage. It outlines the respective rights and obligations of both spouses. (2:236-2:237)

Two situations are outlined here. The first involves a woman who is divorced before her marriage had been consummated or a dowry agreed. In this case, the husband is obliged to recompense her according to his means. Such a gesture would have an immense psychological impact on the woman, who would be devastated at having her marriage dissolved before it has even begun. It would go a long way towards dissipating any bitterness or acrimony left in her heart. The unfulfilled marriage would be understood as an unfortunate mistake rather than a reflection on her suitability or integrity. The aim would be to diffuse the tension and conduct the severance of the relationship amicably, in a spirit of fairness and with no hard feelings. Meanwhile, the size of the gift offered in this case is left to the human being's discretion and conscience, within his financial ability: (2:236)

The second possibility arises if a dowry has been agreed and settled, in which case half of it must, in principle, be paid unless the wife, or her guardian if she is young, choose, without any pressure, to forgo such a payment. Forgoing such a claim is the attitude of one who has the power of the law on her side but she declines to touch the money of a person with whom she no longer has any relation. Nevertheless, the Quran goes on to urge more fear of God, tolerance, magnanimity and benevolence on the part of all involved. It exhorts: (2:237)

### A QUESTION OF WORSHIP

Having evoked an atmosphere of submission to and God-consciousness, the Chapter interjects with a short passage on formal prayer, the main act of worship in the Quranic message, before it deals with other aspects of divorce. The inference here, in the inimitable style of the Quran, is that obedience to God in matters of marriage and divorce is an act of worship no less reverent or commendable than formal prayer itself. This is in total harmony with the comprehensive Quranic concept of worship (*ibadah*) which encompasses all human activity.

The Chapter says: (2:238-239) This is a clear instruction to Muslims to attend regularly to the five daily prayers, offering them in the proper manner, in the correct form, and at their appointed times. The middle formal prayer is generally taken to refer to *asr*, or mid-afternoon formal prayer.

The Chapter points out that even in times of danger and war, Muslims must not neglect the obligatory prayers. They may perform them in the most convenient way possible under the circumstances. They are permitted to perform the prayer in whatever posture they find themselves in, walking or riding, without having to face the *qibla*, the direction of the Kabah, or follow the prescribed procedure.

When safety and security prevail, formal prayer must be observed in the normal way, as taught to Muslims by God Almighty in the Quran and through the Sunna of the Prophet Muhammad. The Chapter stresses this fact: (2:239) Indeed, human beings would not have known anything if it were not for the fact that God teaches them in every minute of their lives.

### More Rights for Widows and Divorcees

This interjection, with its fine spiritual touch, serves as a fitting interlude before the remaining rules on the rights of widows and on divorce are given: (2:240-2:242)

The first of these three signs establishes the right of a widow to

a bequest by her deceased husband, allowing her to stay in his home with a provision for her maintenance. She does not need to leave his home or marry again during that period if that is what she chooses to do. This does not exclude her right to leave the house after four months and ten days, the waiting period, as laid down earlier. While the waiting period is an obligation upon the widow, her staying in her late husband's home for a year is her right.

The Chapter goes on to state that: (2:240) The use of the plural 'you' in this context is significant because it indicates a collective communal responsibility for the welfare of widowed women, and a need for all members of the community to respect and observe Quranic rules and norms.

The concluding phrase: *God is Almighty, Wise* draws attention to God's power and wisdom in laying down such rules, with a hint of warning that they should not be taken lightly.

The next sign institutes a divorcee's right to provisions, in general, and links the observance of this to virtuous conduct and God-conscious.

The final sign in this section asserts: (2:242) God lays down rules clearly, fairly and effectively, inviting people to reflect on their value and purpose and to appreciate God's blessings and mercy, implicit in them. They should not lose sight of the fact that they are aimed to bring about conciliation and accord. They are straightforward, easy and beneficial to put into practice, but rigorous and decisive at the, same time.

There is a great need for humanity to take heed of the divinely-inspired social order of Islam and put it into effect in their daily life, which will surely bring peace, stability and harmony into their hearts and minds, and into their lives as a whole.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight

points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life:

## LESSON 87(24) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:243-2:248

**Madinah:** *Have **you** not considered those who went forth*
*from their abodes while they were in the thousands*
*being fearful of death? And God said to them: Die!*
*Again, He gave them life. Truly, God is Possessor of Grace*
*for humanity except most of humanity gives not thanks.* (2:243)
*So fight in the Way of God,*
*and know that God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:244
*Who is he who will lend God a fairer loan*
*that He will multiply it for him manifold times?*
*And God seizes and extends and you are returned to Him.* (2:245)
*Have **you** not considered the Council of the Children of Israel*
*after Moses when they said to a Prophet of theirs:*
*Raise up a king for us, and we will fight in the way of God.*
*He said: Perhaps if fighting was prescribed for you,*
*you would not fight.*
*They said: Why should we not fight in the way of God*
*when we were driven out of our abodes with our children.*
*Then, when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away,*
*but for a few of them.*
*And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* (2:246)
**Madinah: Book 28: Samuel Anoints Saul (2:247)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Samuel Anoints Saul (2:248)**

### COMMENTARY°

The present passage gives an account of an episode in the history of past nations to add to the practical lessons given to the Muslim community, as part of its preparation to face what may lie ahead on its way. The first is outlined briefly, but adequately, without even mentioning the people involved. They are a large group who tried to flee from death, leaving their homes to no avail. God caused them to die and brought them back to life, rendering their efforts to evade death futile, and giving them a new life without any effort on their part. As it shows them this example, the Quran urges the believers to fight and donate for the cause of God who gives and takes away both life and wealth.

### FLEEING FROM DEATH

We need not go into the plethora of interpretations with regard to the identity or the time and place of the people referred to in this sign. Had these details been of any particular importance in understanding the moral and the message of the story, they would most certainly have been given in the Quranic account.

Such a mass exodus, with thousands of people fleeing at the same time, whether from a hostile attack or the outbreak of disease, could only occur in a state of total panic. Nevertheless, running away could not save those people from meeting their death: (2:243)

### MULTIPLIED LOAN REPAYMENT

As the Chapter continues, we begin to understand the significance of the story and partly appreciate God's purpose in citing this episode quite early on in the history of the Muslim nation. The next sign says: (2:244)

This sign tells the Muslims very clearly that neither their love of life nor their fear of death should stop them from fighting for God's cause. Death and life are determined by God, and those who believe should fight for His cause and under His banner alone. They should be mindful that God is aware of what they do and is there to respond to their needs and appreciate and reward their actions.

The emphasis on financial sacrifice was essential, as the Chapter strongly states: (2:245) God bestows life and takes it away, and one may go to battle and survive, if that is God's will. Wealth is not lost when spent in a good cause. It is a form of loan to God whose generous repayment is guaranteed, both in this world and in the life to come.

Poverty and wealth are also due to God's will rather than the outcome of one's financial acumen or frugality or philanthropy: (2:245) People and all their possessions shall one day return to God, and so death and poverty no longer pose any threat. Believers shall go ahead and sacrifice their lives, their wealth and all their possessions in the cause of God who has already charted their course and destiny in this world. They shall live their lives to the full, in dignity and freedom, in the service of God Almighty.

This short passage is a fine example of the power of the Quranic language and style. We are immediately taken into a scene of panic and confusion, with thousands of people fleeing in all directions to avoid death and annihilation. Suddenly, they meet the very fate they are trying to escape; no measures or precautions they have taken will avail them. And, just as suddenly and without further explanation, they are brought back to life by the mighty hand of God, who con-

trols everything and whose power is overwhelming. Thus, we realize that life and death are in the hands of God Almighty, as are wealth and fortune, which complement the theme of the passage.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

## QURANIC SIGNS 2:249-2:253

**Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:249)**
**Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:250)**
**Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:251)**
**Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:252)**
**Madinah: Book 28: David, Goliath, Jesus son of Mary (2:253)**

# LESSON 87(25) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

## HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

## WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

## ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:254-2:257

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Spend of what We provided you,*
*before a Day approaches when there is neither trading in it*
*nor friendship nor intercession.*
*And the ones who are ungrateful,*
*they are the ones who are unjust.* (2:254)
*God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal.*
*Neither slumber takes Him nor sleep.*
*To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*Who will intercede with Him but with His permission?*
*He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them.*
*And they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge,*
*but what He willed. His Seat encompassed the heavens*
*and the earth, and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping.*
*And He is The Lofty, The Sublime.* (2:255)
*There is no compulsion in the way of life.*
*Surely, right judgment became clear from error.*
*So whoever disbelieves in false deities and believes in God,*
*then, surely, he held fast to the most firm handhold.*
*It is not breakable. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (2:256)
*God is The Protector of those who believed.*
*He brings them out from the shadows into the light.*
*And those who were ungrateful, their protectors are false deities.*
*They bring them out from the light into the shadows.*
*Those will be the Companions of the Fire.*
*They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (2:257)

### COMMENTARY°

These facts which God reasserted through revelations are timeless and universal, and not restricted to the Muslims of Madinah at that time. The use of a single incident to illustrate an absolute principle is a device used frequently in the Quran.

The Chapter addresses believers directly, urging them to give part of their wealth, which God has bestowed upon them, for the cause of God, complementing the earlier call to fight for God's cause and reinforcing it. (2:254)

God addresses the Muslims in a most intimate and touching way, using the title they most love and value: believers. He calls on them to give out of the wealth He has given them, before it is too late, in order to secure the greatest gain and the highest reward. He calls

upon them to give for His cause; to uphold and defend His way of life and to subdue and uproot wrongdoing and injustice.

The ungrateful *are the unjust* by virtue of their denial of the truth. They wrong themselves by choosing a doomed course in life. They wrong others by misleading and confusing them, depriving them of God's generosity and compassion which brings them peace, security, reassurance and serenity of faith.

### GOD'S UNIQUE ATTRIBUTES

Then follows a sign that summarizes, in powerful and succinct Words, the basic principles of the Quranic message, citing those attributes of God that most aptly assert the meaning and significance of the basic Quranic principle of *tawhid*: the Oneness of God: (2:255)

Every one of these attributes reflects a fundamental aspect of the universal Quranic view of the world. Although the subject matter of this sign would normally be expected to fall within the themes of the Quranic parts received by the Prophet in Makkah, we do find that on several occasions, parts received in Madinah also cover these most important aspects of the Quranic message. For the overall Quranic system to be understood and appreciated, the fundamentals have to be established and firmly implanted in the minds of the believers.

This statement (2:255) clearly and definitively distinguishes the Quranic concept of God from that of the Trinity, adopted and advanced by Christian church councils long after Jesus, and from the pagan beliefs of the ancient Egyptians who confused God with the sun and recognized the existence of lesser gods beside Him.'

The sign describes God as *The Living, The Eternal.* This implies a self-generating, self-sustaining being that is unique and independent of everything else. It is also a being without a beginning or an end, totally outside the dimension of time which defines the beginning and end of other ephemeral beings. Furthermore, this being, God Almighty, is absolute and cannot be defined in conventional terms applicable to all creation. He is unique in every respect, and nothing can be compared with Him. Thus, all other definitions or representations of God, conjured up by the human mind throughout the ages, are false and inadequate.

*The Eternal* implies that God has power over all things and that He is the supreme and ultimate cause, the reason for being of everything, without whom there can be no existence or action.

This statement, *neither slumber takes him nor sleep,* reinforces, in simpler and more graphic terms, the preceding one: that God is the everlasting power sustaining everything in existence. It also dis-

tinguishes God from other beings by pointing out that He is not affected by sleep to any degree, in any shape or form.

God's claim over the cosmos is total and absolute; unconditional and incontestable. This is another aspect of the principle of God's Oneness which confirms that God is supreme, ever-present, eternal, master and owner of all. It completely invalidates the assumption that God has partners in His power or actions.

Here we can see how Quranic principles are directly translated into law for immediate application in life. When God says: (2:255) He is not merely stating a principle of faith, but also laying down a fundamental rule of the order of life He envisages for humanity.

Once the belief is firmly established in our consciousness that everything in this world belongs to God and that what we own is merely on loan for a limited period of time, greed and lust to accumulate wealth and worldly possessions by any means will not be difficult to hold in check. This belief is bound to fill our hearts with contentment, humility, tolerance, and magnanimity. One will face wealth and poverty with equal ease and steadfastness, and if impoverished will not be in the least bitter or grudging.

*Who will intercede with Him, but with His permission?* This statement underlines yet another aspect of the concept of God's Oneness, distinguishing clearly the Supreme Being, God, and His sub ordinate creation. All creatures stand in total humility and submissio to the Master, never arrogating to themselves powers or authorities not delegated to them by Him. Above all, they are not to intercede on behalf of anyone without God's permission, and when they are granted such permission, they will act within its limits, as set out by God Almighty. Some will certainly attain a higher degree of approval than others, but none of them will overstep their set limits.

This statement, *He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them,* expresses God's omniscience. He has full and total knowledge of the present, the past and the future, which human beings cannot possibly know or perceive. He is ever aware of what human beings know and what they do not, and will not, know. They can learn only what He allows them to learn.

The fact that God knows our present, past and future actions and deeds, and beyond, ought to fill us with dread and awe, for being totally and permanently exposed before God Almighty. It inspires total humility and submission to the one omniscient God. It is also poignant to reflect on the corollary of this principle: *and they will not comprehend anything of His knowledge.*

Here we have another example of the unique style of the Quran in expressing an abstract idea by means of a visual image, in order

to make the meaning clear and accessible. *His Seat encompassed the heavens and the earth.* The word *kursi*, meaning "seat' or "chair' or'throne', is usually used to denote realm or sovereignty. The idea here is that God's sovereignty and authority extend over the entire cosmos, and the image makes it clear, easy to grasp and comprehend.

Likewise, the phrase, *and He is not hampered by their safe-keeping,* is an expression of God's omnipotence, depicting in simple but powerful terms how easy it is for God to sustain and preserve the heavens and the earth.

Quranic expressions of this kind have provoked a great deal of controversy, largely because commentators ignored the Quranic syntax and leaned heavily on alien and absurd philosophies which distorted much of the clarity and simplicity of the Quran.

The sign ends with two more attributes of God: *He is The Lofty, The Sublime,* exalting God above all else. The Arabic words make it clear that these attributes are exclusive to God Almighty. No human being, or any other creature, could aspire to these qualities, and those who try shall be humbled and disgraced.

### FREEDOM OF BELIEF GUARANTEED

Having outlined some of the most essential and detailed aspects of faith, and having precisely defined the status of God and the nature of His relationship with the rest of creation, the Chapter goes on to describe the proper behavior of the believers as they adopt this faith and pass it on to others, and assume the leadership of humanity. (2:256-2:257)

The Quran was revealed to declare and establish the great universal principle that: *There is no compulsion in religion (the way of life). Surely right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256) This reflects the honor God has reserved for person and the high regard in which human will, thought and emotions are held, and the freedom he is granted to choose his beliefs, and the responsible position he is afforded to be judge of his own actions.

Freedom of belief is the most basic right that identifies person as a human being. To deny anyone this right is to deny him or her humanity. Freedom of belief also implies the freedom to express and propagate one's belief without fear of threat or persecution; otherwise, that freedom is hollow and meaningless.

The Arabic text, using a generic negative, imparts a negation of the very idea of compulsion. When it comes to matters of belief, not only should these never be imposed by coercion or compulsion, but there cannot even be an option to use such a means of conversion or persuasion.

The Chapter reinforces the principle with a gentle, but firm, touch to arouse the human conscience and guide it along the path of enlightenment, saying simply: *Surely right judgment became clear from error.* (2:256)

The Chapter elaborates the theme further, saying: (2:256) It is false deities that must be rejected, while faith must be reserved for God, who alone deserves faith and trust. The Arabic term for "false deities' is *taghut*, meaning tyrant, a word denoting anyone that takes hold of the mind or suppresses the truth, or transgresses the laws and limits set by God. It refers to forces and systems that disregard the divine religious, moral, social and legal order and operate in this life on values and principles not sanctioned by God or derived from His guidance and teachings. To resist such forces, in all their manifestations, and to believe in God's oneness is the only certain path to success and salvation.

The light of faith and truth is one and unique, leading to the one straight path; while darkness, in the sense of evil, can take various shapes and forms. There is darkness in caprice and uncontrolled desire; in deviation, conceit and tyranny; and there is darkness in abject acquiescence and servility; as well as in ostentation and hypocrisy, in lechery and greed, and in cynicism and scepticism. All these forms of darkness stem from the evil of abandoning God's guidance and submitting to powers and laws other than His. Leaving the light that radiates from God plunges person into darkness and despondency, and the ultimate end is even worse: (2:257)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.

I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.

I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)

## QURANIC SIGNS 2:258-2:260

**Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:258)**
**Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:259)**
**Madinah: Book 26: Abraham (2:260)**

# LESSON 87(26) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, VOCABULARY

### WHAT IS A CONCEPT?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:261-2:266

*A parable of those who spend their wealth in the way of God*
*is like a parable of a grain. It puts forth seven ears of wheat.*
*In every ear of wheat, a hundred grains.*
*And God multiplies for whom He wills.*
*And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (2:261)
*Those who spend their wealth in the way of God*
*and, again, pursue not what they spent with reproachful reminders*
*nor injury, the compensation for them is with their Lord.*
*And there will be neither fear in them*
*nor will they feel remorse.* (2:262)
*An honorable saying and forgiveness are better than charity*
*succeeded by injury. And God is Sufficient, Forbearing.* (2:263)
*O those who believed! Render not untrue your charities*
*with reproachful reminders nor injury like he who spends of his*
*wealth to show off to humanity,*
*and believes not in God and the Last Day.*
*His parable is like the parable of a smooth rock.*
*Over it is earth dust. A heavy downpour lit on it, and left it bare.*
*They have no power over anything of what they earned*
*and God guides not the ungrateful folk.* (2:264)
*And the parable of those who spend their wealth*
*looking for the goodwill of God and for confirming their souls*
*is like the parable of a garden on a hillside.*
*A heavy downpour lit on it. Then, it gave its harvest double.*

*And even if lights not on it a heavy downpour, then a dew.*
*And God is Seeing of what you do.* (2:265)
*Would anyone of you wish that he have a garden of date palm trees*
*and grapevines beneath which rivers run with all kinds of fruits in*
*it for him? Then, old age lit on him, and he had weak offspring.*
*Then, a whirlwind lit on it in which there is a fire.*
*Then, it was consumed. Thus, God makes manifest His signs*
*for you so that perhaps you will reflect.* (2:266)

## COMMENTARY°

### ETHICS OF QURANIC CHARITY

The present passage opens with gentle exhortations, touching inner, deep-seated human feelings and senses. It depicts a vigorous, flourishing picture of life, with grains sprouting and growing to yield multitudes of grains and return many times what has been invested. This verdant and lush image, the Chapter says, represents a model for those who spend of their own money for the cause of God. (2:261)

With this vivid image, the Quran directs the human conscience to giving and to charity. By giving away what one dearly loves to retain, one is in fact earning; and the more one gives, the more one gains, in a perpetual process which, with God's blessing, can continue without any limits or restrictions. (2:261) God's grace never runs out, nor is it withheld. God is aware of people's thoughts, intentions and feelings, and nothing escapes His knowledge.

The question here is: What kind of spending is made to grow in such a phenomenal way, and is rewarded so generously by God, both in this life and in the life to come?

The spending that is generously rewarded is that motivated by the purest and highest human feelings, and which enhances such feelings. It is not intended to degrade or spite or hurt. It is purely done for the sake of God Almighty: (2:262)

When those who have, give, they do so from the wealth God has given them. Indeed, this act of charity is, in the Quranic sense, a loan given to God which is then returned multiplied manifold. Recipients of charity are there to provide the giver with an opportunity to earn a greater reward from God. The terms which the Chapter lays down in this passage emphasize these values, seeking to dissuade givers from flaunting their generosity and encouraging the needy to abandon any feelings of inferiority or inadequacy. Both are beneficiaries of God's bounty, and both shall receive their respective rewards so long as they observe the ethics and the terms laid down by God. (2:262) Givers should not fear poverty, jealousy or injustice, nor

should they regret their actions or have any concern regarding their fate in the hereafter.

### CHARITY COUPLED WITH GOOD MANNERS

The next sign reasserts the idea that a charitable act followed by wicked behavior is worthless: (2:263) A pleasant word or a kind-hearted gesture would be far more favorable and likely to spread trust, confidence and love and to calm the hearts and souls. Charity, after all, is not a favor from the giver to the recipient, but an obligation towards God. He neither needs these pitiful donations nor is He anxious to exact punishment on the ungrateful. All people owe their very existence to God Almighty. He overlooks many of their shortcomings, and they ought to learn from Him by showing forgiveness and compassion towards the poor and the needy. (2:264-2:265)

We are presented here with a complete portrait, which is the composite of two perfectly contrasting scenes. Each is full of detail and contrast, beautifully reflecting ideas and feelings in elegant strokes of color and imagination.

The first of these two scenes is arid, harsh and barren, but with a superficially attractive exterior; the other welcoming and fertile. The first reflects nothing of the warmth of faith; its harshness is concealed under a thin layer of soil, like the thin layer of hypocrisy that shields the real personality of the ungrateful. As soon as rain falls, the veneer disappears and the barren interior is revealed: (2:264)

The other scene depicts the believers: (2:265) Such people's hearts are filled with happiness and reassurance. They are full of confidence in the value and goodness of their actions. These are portrayed like a fertile garden with thick, rich soil, as opposed to the thin layer in the previous scene, set on a hillside. Rain revives and reinvigorates it to yield: (2:265) In fact it does not need heavy rain. Only: (2:265) That is exactly the effect charity has on the believer. It rejuvenates him and enhances his relationship with God who, in turn, would reward him and make his wealth grow even more, thereby raising the quality of social welfare and the life of the community as a whole.

In the inimitable style of the Quran, the Chapter presents a fully integrated and harmonious picture, with exquisite detail and elegant contrast of mood and color, depicting every feeling and every emotion, and reflecting every idea and meaning with clarity and ease. The sign concludes by stressing that God is aware of the real motives and intentions behind people's actions.

The scene that follows depicts the outcome of flaunting one's charity and generosity, and how He thus causes their effect to be to-

tally and irreversibly wiped out. In vivid and powerful terms, the Chapter paints a depressing and violent picture.

Charity, in essence, is given a tangible picture. It is fresh, opulent, luxuriant, bountiful and fertile. Thus is charity in its effect on the life of the giver and the recipient alike, and on the life of the community. It is blessed, purifying, ever-growing. We can see clearly from this passage how the Quranic style achieves.

### GIVING AWAY THE BEST

The Chapter goes on to outline the nature of charity, its methods, manners and outcome: (2:267) Following the ethics and principles of charity outlined in the preceding signs, one should give of the best in one's possession, rather than of the less worthy, which one would not accept if offered in trade, unless one could strike a bargain price. God has no need to accept charity out of people's second-rate possessions.

This is a broad principle, valid for all time and all types of property, whether earned, cultivated, extracted or mined, whether known at the time of the Prophet Muhammad or not. Not a single kind of earnings or capital, acquired at any time, is exempt from the obligation of charity, and *zakat* accrues on it all, in accordance with the rates and proportions specified by the Prophet for the various types of capital known then. These form the standard by which percentages and proportions are determined for new types of wealth, capital or earnings.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

#### HOW DO I MAP?

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

**CONCEPT MAPPING:**

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

**PRE-QUESTIONS:**

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

**DEFINITION:**

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

**VISUAL AIDS**

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

**EXAMPLES**

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

**EXPERIENCE**

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

## LESSON 87(27) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONCEPTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Quranic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Quranic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (*Quranic Sunnah*) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:267-2:273

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Spend of what is good that you earned, and from what We brought out for you from the earth. And aim not at getting the bad of it to spend while you would not be ones who take it, but you would close an eye to it. And know that God is Sufficient, Worthy of Praise.* (2:267)

*Satan threatens you with poverty and commands you to depravity; whereas God promises you His forgiveness from Himself and His grace. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (2:268)

*He gives wisdom to whom He wills. And whomever is given wisdom, then, surely, was given much good and none recollects no doubt but those imbued with intuition.* (2:269)

*And whatever of contributions you spent or vows that you vowed, then, truly, God knows it. And for the ones who are unjust there is no helper.* (2:270)

*If you show your charity, then, how bountiful it is*
*while if you conceal it and give it to the poor, that would be better*
*for you. This absolves you of some of your evil deeds.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (2:271)
*Their guidance is not on thee. But God guides whomever He wills.*
*And whatever of good you spend, it is for yourselves.*
*And spend not but looking for the Countenance of God.*
*And whatever of good you spend, your account will be paid to you*
*in full and you will not be wronged.* (2:272)
*Spend for the poor, those who were restrained in the way of God*
*and are not able to travel on the earth. The one who is ignorant*
*assumes them to be rich because of their having reserve.*
*You will recognize them by their mark.*
*They ask not persistently of humanity.*
*And whatever of good you spend, then, truly,*
*God is Knowing of that.* (2:273

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter goes on to reveal to the believers that miserliness and the tendency to give to charity out of one's inferior possessions are motivated by lack of faith in God and by fear of poverty. Such fear is only entertained by those who have no trust in God and their accountability to Him. It identifies these motives clearly, pointing to their original instigator: (2:268-269)

The Chapter is telling the believers that Satan insinuates into their minds a fear of poverty in order to arouse their selfishness and greed, and that it is he that entices them to transgress and commit indecencies. This fear was responsible for the practice of burying one's young daughters alive in pre-Quranic Arabia, while greed and excessive lust for wealth led some to gorge themselves on usury—both abhorrent and shameful practices.

In contrast to Satan's destructive exhortations, God promises forgiveness and generosity and provides sustenance and livelihood for everyone, in return for their generosity, because He is beneficent and fully aware of people's innermost thoughts and intentions. Furthermore: (2:269) God grants wisdom and common sense to enable people to reason and evaluate their actions and to seek moderation and forethought in their attitudes and behavior. What a great gift, indeed! ... *those imbued with intuition* ... take heed. (2:269)

They are the ones who appreciate and understand and judge matters sensibly. As in all matters, it is up to God's absolute will to determine who deserves to receive the gift of wisdom, but the Chapter reassures those who sincerely strive for wisdom and guidance that

they shall not be denied these gifts.

This statement (2:268) asserts the fundamental truth that, in this life, there are only two clear choices to make: God's way or the way of Satan. person can either heed God's advice or act on Satan's promises; rejecting one way means following the other. Only one way, the way of God, leads to the truth and all other routes belong to Satan. This truth is frequently and deliberately emphasized in the Quran in order to leave those who reject God's path with no argument or excuses. The path of truth is one and well defined, and people are free to take it or turn away from it. They will face the consequences of their choice.

The Chapter continues with the theme of charity, emphasizing that God is fully aware of what people give and how they give. He will reward them for both the act of giving and the intention behind it: (2:270-2:271)

Giving, in this sense, refers to all kinds of alms and charity, voluntary as well as obligatory, for private or public causes. Vows and pledges are made by individuals for personal reasons and must be made for the sake of God and for no other cause.

The Chapter urges that voluntary charity is best given in private, to ensure that it is free from all traces of flaunting and pretension. However, publicizing the giving of obligatory charity could in fact be beneficial because it would promote the practice and help establish it in society. Therefore, both ways are acceptable: (2:271) This statement covers both cases, giving each its appropriate weight, promising atonement from sin for both of them: (2:271) It also evokes consciousness of God on the one hand, and confidence and reassurance on the other. Furthermore, it confirms that all actions and intentions are known to God, who is aware of all that people do.

We cannot fail to note the elaborate and extensive way in which the ethics of giving for charity are covered in the Chapter, from which two important conclusions can be drawn.

First is the fact that the Quranic message recognizes human nature, its propensity to be selfish and tight-fisted and its constant need for motivation and encouragement. Only in this way can human nature overcome these tendencies and aspire towards the noble and benevolent spheres God wishes person to reach.

Second is the nature of the community the Quran was addressing. The Arabs were particularly known for their hospitality and generous disposition, but these were tarnished by their tendency to flaunt their generosity and by their pursuit of fame, acclaim and recognition. It would not, therefore, have been easy to teach them to give all that up and give of their wealth purely for the sake of God. The task

required extensive education and motivation to instruct them in self-denial and dedication to God's cause, in which Islam has achieved unparalleled success.

### CHARITY BENEFITS THE CHARITABLE

At this point the Chapter addresses the Prophet personally, setting out a number of essential facts bearing on the formulation of Islamic principles and scope of behavior: (2:272)

Guidance is a matter for God alone. Not even the Messenger of God could be held responsible for whether individuals heed the truth or not. God is the Creator, and He alone has power over people's hearts and minds. The mission of God's Messenger is to convey His message, and then it is up to God how He gives guidance to individual human beings, as they deserve to be guided. In taking this crucial issue out of the human domain, an important principle is established that a believer should seek and receive guidance from God alone. It also impresses upon the Messenger a need to show understanding, tolerance and perseverance in the face of any rejection or resistance he meets in conveying God's message to the public. He is to appeal to God to grant them guidance and show them the light.

Prophet Muhammad is directed to open his heart to people, to show kindness, and to offer all possible help, leaving judgement and reward to God Almighty. (2:272)

With such tenets and principles, the Quranic message opens the widest possible horizons of compassion and tolerance. It goes beyond the recognition of religious freedom and rejection of compulsion and coercion. It demands universal human compassion and establishes the right of all needy members of society to help and support, regardless of their religious faith, as long as they do not pose any threat to the community. It further asserts that the rewards of those who give for the sake of God are safely guaranteed. No other religious faith has risen to or achieved such high standards of human or social morality.

The Chapter emphasizes that: (2:272) Only a believer gives for the sake of God and no other. He does not give to charity in order to gain influence or praise, nor does he exploit his generosity to achieve personal ends or satisfy his ego, nor does he seek the favor or pleasure of people in power or authority. A believer gives to charity in the full knowledge and satisfaction that he will be rewarded by God; and that his life, character, and standing will be enhanced and that, furthermore, God's generosity in the hereafter is guaranteed and will be all the more fulfilling..

The Chapter then refers to a specific form of giving, the benefi-

ciary of which is an honest and honorable section of society who are not ashamed of being poor and who are prevented by their dignity and self-esteem from degrading themselves by begging: (2:273)

The description fitted a group of Emigrants who had migrated with the Prophet to Madinah, leaving behind all their belongings and members of their families. They settled in Madinah; some of them, known as Ahl al-Suffah, lived in and around the Prophet's Mosque, and devoted their lives completely to the service of the community, volunteering for military missions and expeditions or guarding the Prophet and his household and mosque. These people were not able to work and earn a living, but behaved with dignity and propriety, refusing to beg or ask for charity, so much so that only a few people were aware of their plight.

Nevertheless, the directive has a universal application. In every generation there will be people not able, for various reasons, to earn their livelihood, but who insist on preserving their modesty and personal dignity by not becoming a burden on anyone else. They do their utmost to hide their poverty and distress, and only a few people are able to detect and appreciate their predicament.

Thus, in its unique and inimitable style, the Quran depicts in a few words a full and deeply poignant picture of human dignity and self-respect. The highly expressive syntax brings the features of those people gradually to life, and puts the reader face to face with their human characters.

Those honorable people who hide their want, as eagerly as they would their nakedness, could only be offered assistance privately and in such a way as would not offend their dignity. The sign closes with the appropriate comment that: (2:273) He will certainly not let it go unrewarded.

Finally, the next sign gives a concise summary of the whole subject of charity and reiterates, reassuringly, the pledge made to those who give out of sheer humanity and altruism: (2:274) They will have their reward which includes an increase of what they have in this life, other life blessings, and a reward in the hereafter. But they also have what is more than that, namely earning God's pleasure. Therefore, they need fear nothing whatsoever in this life or in the life to come.

There is a striking harmony between this closing comment and the earlier detailed statements. It provides a fitting final note for the Islamic ethical code of charity which represents a vital aspect of Islamic community and social life.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

### WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

### WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice.

The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.*

*They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26)

To be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19)

Arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14)

To swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

## Lesson 87(28) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Developing One's Perspective:
## Creating or Exploring Arguments

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

## Quranic Chapter 2: The Cow (al-Baqarah)
## Quranic Signs 2:274-2:281

**Madinah:** *Those who spend their wealth by nighttime and daytime, secretly or in public, then, for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:274)
*Those who consume usury will not arise, but like he who arise: whom Satan prostrated by touch. That is because they said: Trading is only like usury and yet God permitted trading and forbade usury. So whoever drew near an admonishment from his Lord and refrained himself, for him is what was past. And his command is with God. While whoever reverted, then, those will be the Companions of the Fire. They, ones who will dwell in it forever!* (2:275)
*God eliminates usury, and He causes charity to increase. And God loves not any sinful ingrate.* (2:276)
*Truly, those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, for them, their compensation is with their Lord. And there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (2:277)
*O those who believed! Be God-conscious of God. And forsake what remained of usury, if you had been ones who believe.* (2:278)
*But if you accomplish it not, then, give ear to war from God and His Messenger.*

*And if you repented, you will have your principal capital, doing no wrong to others nor will you be wronged.* (2:279)
*If a debtor had been possessing adversity, a respite until a time of ease and prosperity. And it is better for you that you be charitable, if you had been knowing.* (2:280)
**Mina:** *And be God-conscious of a Day on which you are returned to God. Again, every soul will be paid its account in full for what it earned, and they will not be wronged.* (2:281)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE HORRIFIC IMAGE OF USURY

Those who gorge themselves on usury cannot rise up except as he may rise up whom Satan has confounded with his touch. That is because they say: (2:275-2:276)

Before we study the Quranic text in detail, let us review the different types of usury, or *riba*, known at the time of revelation and how the Arabs of the pre-Quranic *jahiliyyah*, or Dark Ages, viewed the whole practice of usury. There were two main types, known in Arabic as *riba al-nasiah*, increase related to deferment, and *riba al-fadl*, increase based on difference in quality.

*Riba al-nasah* applies to selling goods on credit for an agreed term. When the term expires, and the buyer finds himself unable to settle, the seller raises the price in lieu of extending the settlement term. If a borrower fails to settle a debt, he agrees to make an additional payment, over the original loan, to the lender in return for an extension of the settlement period. According to others, *riba al-nasiah* was no more than a deferred loan conditional on an implied premium, the deferment being granted in return for the additional payment over the original amount.

That *riba al-nasiah* is usurious is self-explanatory: it involves an increased payment and time extension, the two essential elements of usurious transactions. In *riba al-fadl* there have to be real differences in quality of the same commodity which give rise to an increase in the quantity of one over the other. There is this type of transaction condemned by the Prophet as usurious, since it assigned different values to the two types of dates. Therefore, the Prophet ordered that one type of dates should be sold for cash, which is then used by the seller to buy the other type, thus removing all suspicion of usury.

The requirement to exchange traded goods simultaneously, hand to hand, is important in order to avoid any difference in the two quantities due to a lapse in time which could affect their respective values. It also indicates how sensitive the Prophet was to any suspicion of

usury, and how sagacious was his approach in uprooting it.

### DIVINE ADMONITION REMAINS UNHEEDED

• This (2:275) is a reference not only to those who take interest or charge a usurious gain, but also to society as a whole.

These rules apply to private, one-to-one transactions, while the whole community is condemned to the onslaught of God's wrath in societies where usury forms the basis for financial transactions. Such a society lives in turmoil and constant insecurity.

Those with vested interests objected to the condemnation and abolition of usury, claiming that: (2:275) Their argument rested on the false assumption that the objective of both trading and usury was to secure gains, but trading is open to the risk of loss as well as to making profit. It also requires real tangible input from the trader. Usury transactions, on the other hand, are aimed at bringing guaranteed gains for the lender in any case. That is the crucial difference between the two. Any transactions involving a guaranteed return for the lender, under all circumstances, are usurious and, hence, forbidden. There can be no argument on this point. God has permitted trading for many reasons that make it beneficial for human life, and the absence of guaranteed returns is first among them.

However, the Quranic message faced the situation existing at the time with realism, averting any kind of economic or social upheaval. It declared its new rules effective immediately and turned a new page with respect to what had been going on previously: (2:275)

It seems to suggest that exoneration for previous usurious activities would be left to God's grace, thereby providing individuals with a stronger incentive to desist and seek to conduct their trade withou usury. Nevertheless, it goes on to warn those who go back to such practices: (2:275) It affirms with power and authority for the benefit of those who might delude themselves that the hereafter was a long way away: (2:276)

This statement (2:276) clearly indicates that those who persist with usury, after all that has been said about it, are guilty of grave wrongdoing and condemned by God. Evidently, those who legalize what God has forbidden are guilty and damned, even if they assert their belief in Islam with all the power at their disposal.

The Quran is not mere words one utters, but it presents a comprehensive way and system of life. To reject a part of it is to reject it all. In this case, there is not the slightest doubt that usury is totally forbidden. Therefore, to legalize it and build the life of society on it is tantamount to unbelief.

## IN PERFECT CONTRAST WITH USURERS

In contrast to the preceding example of disbelief and wrongdoing, the Chapter presents the case of faith and virtuous conduct, highlighting the essential attributes of the community of believers and the basis of the economic system which disavows usury and has the firm foundation of the important institution of *zakat*: (2:277)

The main element in this sign is that of *zakat* which denotes giving willingly, expecting nothing from any human being in return. The sign also introduces a feature of the community of believers and one of its important pillars, before it goes on to describe the total reassurance, tranquillity and happiness such a community enjoys.

The institution of *zakat* represents the foundation of a caring, sympathetic and supportive society, which has no cause to resort to usury in any aspect of its life. The image of *zakat* has faded somewhat in the minds of those unfortunate generations of Muslims who have had no experience of life under the Quranic message. They have not seen Quranic laws, ethics and principles shaping the daily lives of people, and creating a healthy, virtuous, decent society. They have had no experience of how *zakat* works in practical terms to bring about economic growth and prosperity as a reward for individual diligence and honest cooperation.

*Zakat* is levied by Muslim authorities at the yearly rate of 2.5 per cent on liquid money (or 5-10 % on crops, and 20 % on mineral resources), as an incumbent duty rather than optional charity. The authorities then distribute the proceeds among those in need in the community as widely as possible, in order for the beneficiaries to meet their basic necessities and alleviate their hardships. Debtors who are insolvent are helped with *zakat* money to settle their debts, whether these are personal or commercial. Poor people are helped to find appropriate work that makes them self- sufficient.

The form in which such a system operates is of secondary importance. What is important is the spirit in which the system and society come together and function as a whole to bring about genuine care and effective social welfare.

God promises those who conduct themselves according to the ethics and principles of faith, in submission to the divine will and in a spirit of cooperation: (2:277)

## TOTAL WAR AGAINST THE USURERS

Having evoked an atmosphere of calm and peace, the Chapter makes a final passionate appeal to the true believers to eradicate usury and rid their society of it completely, or face a relentless war waged against them by none other than God Almighty and His Mes-

senger: (2:278-2:279) What a terrifying prospect! How could the frail and powerless humans even contemplate going to war against God and His Messenger; the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

Following the revelation of these signs, the Prophet instructed his governor in Makkah to use force against the wealthy clan of al-Mughayrah if they refused to cease dealing with usury.

The Quranic message continues to call on every generation of humanity to desist from the evil of usury and adopt clean and wholesome monetary and commercial practices, assuring them that: (2:279)

### KIND TREATMENT OF INSOLVENT DEBTORS

This passage dealing with lending and borrowing is concluded with advice on how to deal with insolvent debtors. In such cases, the solution would not be to impose further penalties in lieu of deferred payment, but the debtor should be granted a reprieve until he is able to settle his debt, or the lender should be magnanimous enough to write off the debt completely.

The words (2:280) evoke an atmosphere of tolerance and benevolence. They provide a respite from the harshness and severity of greed and selfishness. They call for clemency and compassion on the part of creditor and borrower, as well as by society as a whole.

As believing Muslims, we recognize that these are words of truth that are certain to bring about happiness and security for all humanity: (2:280)

With the Quranic message, a debtor is never put under duress by either the creditor or the law, but is always given another chance to settle his debt. Furthermore, society at large will not stand idly by when a borrower is suffering genuine hardship because of his indebtedness. God calls on the creditor to willingly waive the debt, and if he does so it will be good for him and for the debtor, and for the welfare and cohesion of the community as a whole.

The abolition of usury would lose much of its purpose if the creditor were allowed to harass and squeeze the debtor while he was not able to settle the debt. Thus the Chapter urges that he should be given time to settle, and advises the creditor to waive the debt, in full or in part.

Then, in a highly inspiring comment, the Chapter recalls the fearful Day of Judgment when people shall stand defenseless before God to account for their actions. These words cannot fail to move a thoughtful and conscientious person to write off any money he might be owed by some helpless borrower. (2:281) The day to be feared is awesome indeed. Believers' hearts dread the events of that day when

all will be made to stand in front of God to face the reckoning of their deeds. This sign serves as a fitting comment on a passage devoted to the liquidation of past unfair dealings.

This fear is the powerful 'voice within' which the Quranic message kindles in the deepest recesses of people's minds and hearts to act as a potent guiding force in life. Thus, the Quranic message proves yet again how vigorous, well-integrated, practical and merciful it is, and demonstrates that its overriding aim and objective is the happiness and well-being of person as an individual, and of human society as a whole.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

## LESSON 87(29) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

**Science:** In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw th best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. *He Who taugh by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not.* (96:4-96:5)

**Politics:** Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition.* (39:17-39:18) *After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say.* (51:8)

**Education:** Education in schools after listening to .... *what is said and follow the fairer of it* calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

**Psychology**: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

**Note for the Teacher**: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control your thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights

from many subjects to the analysis. Make use of insights into one subject to inform students' understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[3]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH)
## QURANIC SIGNS 2:282-2:283

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! When you contracted a debt for a term—that which is determined—then, write it down. Let one who is a scribe write it down between you justly. One who is a scribe should not refuse to write it down as God taught him. So let him write down and let the debtor dictate. Let him be God-conscious of, his Lord, and diminish not anything out of it. But if the debtor had been mentally deficient, or weak, or not able to dictate himself, then, let his protector dictate justly. And call two witnesses to bear witness from among your men. Or if there are not two men, then a the human being and two women, with whom you are well-pleased as witnesses, so that if one of them (f) goes astray, then, the other one of the two will remind her. And the witnesses will not refuse when they were called. And grow not weary that you write it down, be it small or great, with its term. That is more equitable with God and more upright for testimony, and likelier not to be in doubt unless it be a trade, that which is transferred at the time— to give and take among yourselves. Then, there is no blame on you if you not write it down. And call witnesses when you have a transaction. Let neither one who is a scribe nor witness be pressed. And if you accomplish that, then, it is, truly, disobedience on your part. So be God-conscious. And God teaches you. And God is Knowing of everything.* (2:282)

*And if you had been on a journey and find no one who is a scribe, then, a guarantee of that which is held in hand. But if any of you entrusted to another, then, let who was trusted give back his trust and let him be God-conscious of his Lord, and keep not back testimony. And he who keeps back, he, then, truly, his heart is one that is perverted. And God is Knowing of what you do.* (2:283)

## COMMENTARY°

### LOAN ARRANGEMENT AND DOCUMENTATION

Let us now take a closer look at the Quranic principles established with respect to loans: (2:282)

The general rule is that details of all fixed-term loans must be in writing and that a third party must do the recording in order to ensure total impartiality and fairness. The writer is required to record the agreed terms of the loan faithfully, without interference, bias or prejudice. He is obliged to do his job fully and competently as a duty to God who has blessed him with the ability to write, and for which he will be appropriately rewarded: (2:282)

Having established that the terms of loans should be committed to writing by an independent document writer, the Chapter goes on to explain how the writing should be carried out: (2:282)

The party incurring the liability, the borrower, is the one to dictate to the writer, acknowledging the amount borrowed and his commitment to the terms and conditions of the loan, as a safeguard against any injustice to him. As the weaker party to the transaction, he would be less liable to alter the terms and conditions. This would reinforce the borrower's commitment to the liability. For, were the creditor to dictate, there would be no guarantee that he might not tamper with the terms and conditions of the loan to his advantage. Furthermore, the Chapter appeals to the borrower's conscience to be scrupulous and faithful in dictating the terms of the loan. It goes on to advise that if the borrower is feeble-minded, under age, or unable to dictate through ignorance or an impediment of speech, or any other reason, his guardian, attorney or trustee, may do so on his behalf, showing the same, if not greater, scrupulous fairness.

The Chapter gives detailed instructions concerning the witnessing of the contract: For the contract to be valid, it must be witnessed by two men or, if they are not readily available, one man and two women, all of whom should be of good standing in the community and deemed acceptable as witnesses by both parties. (2:282) The reason for recommending men witnesses in the first instance is that, in a Muslim society, the majority of marketplace attendants are normally men. Nevertheless, if two men cannot be found to witness a contract, a person and two women will do. But why two women? Since this is a legal matter, the Chapter does not leave the answer to speculation; and explains: *so that if one of them (f) goes astray, then, the other one of the two will remind her.* (2:282)

The Chapter calls on people not to refuse to act as witnesses if invited to do so, as it did with the writer earlier, saying: (2:282) It is an obligation, rather than a privilege, because it is a means of estab-

lishing justice and preserving rights. Witnesses must carry out their duty willingly, honestly and without any condescension or deference towards either of the parties.

The Chapter moves on to another, more general, aspect of legal and business transactions: (2:282) In spot trading, executed immediately and frequently, there is no need for writing dawn the details and the mere presence of witnesses will suffice. The Chapter proceeds to specify the rights of contract writers and witnesses, assuring them of the protection they deserve.

Finally the Chapter, in keeping with the Quranic way of igniting the inner powers of the human conscience, calls on believers to fear God and reminds them of His grace and favor in giving them knowledge and understanding, so that they may conduct their affairs in accordance with His will and guidance.

The Chapter rounds off the subject of loans by dealing with the special case of borrowing money while on a journey, when scribes may be difficult to find. Under these circumstances, to facilitate the transaction and ensure repayment of the loan, a verbal agreement is valid and binding provided a tangible article is given, and accepted, as security for the loan: (2:283)

Both creditor and borrower are trustees: the former entrusted with the security and the latter with the money he has borrowed, and they are both called upon to fulfil their trust and fear God, the ultimate master and ruler and judge over all.

With all these principles in mind, the Chapter speaks about giving evidence in cases of litigation. Transgression in this instance is attributed to the heart, where a person's intention to do or not to do things originates, but the statement contains a veiled threat in stressing that God has full knowledge of all you do.

### WHERE ULTIMATE AUTHORITY LIES

The Chapter goes on to elaborate this point further, arousing deeper fear and consciousness of God, to whom everything belongs and who is aware of every thought, whether concealed or stated. He is sure to bring everyone to account, and He has full control over people's ultimate destiny: (2:284)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with teachers about any study problems

## LESSON 87(30) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 2: THE COW (AL-BAQARAH) QURANIC SIGNS 2:284-2:286

**Madinah:** *To God belongs what is in the heavens*
*and in and on the earth. Whether you show*
*what is within yourselves, or conceal it, God will make a reckoning*
*with you for it. And He will forgive whom He wills.*
*And He will punish whom He wills.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (2:284)
*The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him*
*from his Lord as do the ones who believe.*
*All believed in God and His angels and His Books*
*and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among*
*anyone of His Messengers.*
*And they said: We heard and we obeyed,*
*so grant Thy forgiveness, Our Lord!*
*And to Thee is the Homecoming.* (2:285)
*God places not a burden on a soul beyond its capacity.*
*For it is what it earned and against it is what it deserved.*
*Our Lord! Take us not to task if we forgot or made a mistake.*
*Our Lord! Burden us not with a severe test like that which* ***You*** *had*
*burdened those who were before us.*
*Our Lord! Load us not such that we have no energy for it*
*and pardon us and forgive us and have mercy on us.*
***You*** *are our Defender so help us*
*against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:286)

### COMMENTARY°

These two signs make up the final passage of this comprehensive and remarkable Chapter, the longest in the Quran. Its subject matter covers a wide range of issues and fundamental Quranic concepts, rules and principles. It outlines the nature and role of the Muslim community in the world, and identifies its enemies and detractors, their attitudes and the methods they use to undermine and

weaken it, and the means the community has to use in order to combat their intrigues and thwart their schemes. The Chapter then elaborates on the nature and scope of the human being's role in the world, as well as his weaknesses and shortcomings.

Throughout the Chapter we have found frequent references to the recognition and endorsement of the Quranic message of all divine messages revealed to earlier Prophets and Messengers. Now the Chapter gives the final summation: (2:285) The two passages coalesce beautifully as if to form the frame of a single work of art.

The Chapter covers quite extensively many of the laws and rules governing all aspects of personal and communal life. It has described at length the excesses and the impertinence of some communities of the Children of Jacob. Here it concludes with a clear statement regarding the fulfilment, or otherwise, of one's obligations in this life. It stresses that God neither wishes to overburden the believers who uphold the faith; nor to favor them with any concessions or privileges, as some Children of Jacob had claimed for themselves. Nor does He leave them to their own devices. (2:286)

The Chapter has related various episodes of their history, pointing out the grace God accorded them and how some of them had received that grace with insolence and ingratitude, for which they had to pay a heavy price amounting, in certain cases, to their own lives. Here it concludes with a moving and passionate prayer in which believers plead with God Almighty.

The Chapter has instituted jihad and generous donations for God's cause to combat aggression. It ends with believers seeking God's help and support, saying: (2:286)

These concluding signs are precisely formulated, and every word has its place and significance in the text. Taken as a whole, they reflect the central aspects of faith and define the position of believers, their relationship with God and their perception of His will and purpose in the world, which they accept and willingly submit themselves to Him. The signs are a superb example of the excellence of the Quranic style and approach, which remain fascinating even to those who are well acquainted with the Quran. Let us now look more closely at these two signs.

### ONE TRUE FAITH

The Messenger believes in what has been revealed to him by his Lord, and so do the believers. Each one of them believes in God, His angels, His Books, and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of His Messengers. And they say: (2:285)

The Quran refers to that privileged community of believers who

are the archetype of faith, and to all succeeding communities modelled on their example. This community is honored by, and greatly appreciates, being mentioned in the same breath as God's Messenger.

The Messenger's faith springs directly from the revelations he receives from God, the ultimate truth. It is a degree of faith that cannot be described except by one who has experienced it; it remains beyond comprehension for those mortals who have not experienced divine revelation and is, therefore, totally unique and exclusive to God's Messenger himself. That is why it is such an honor for ordinary believers to he mentioned side by side with God's Messenger.

The Chapter defines the nature and parameters of this faith. It is a comprehensive and universal faith, commensurate with the far-reaching and historic role the Muslim community is destined to inherit and take on in the world. It is a commitment that identifies humanity, throughout its history, as being of only two main groups: the believers who represent the party of God, and the unbelievers who constitute the party of Satan.

According to the Quranic message, belief in God is the foundation of a Muslim's understanding of life, and of the code governing his life, morals, economic and all other activities. It means believing in God as the Supreme Being, the Lord of everything and the sole object of reverence and worship. He is the ultimate authority over the human conscience and behavior in every single aspect of his life.

... *and His angels* ... is an important aspect of belief in the unseen, the unknowable which lies beyond human perception or understanding, or, to use the Islamic term *ghayb*. The human being's ability to perceive and accept a world above and beyond the physical world whose existence he can discern and verify sets him above the rest of creation and confers on him his human qualities. This belief puts into proper perspective the human being's natural curiosity for what lies beyond the material physical world, which he instinctively and clearly perceives to exist. Without this clear perspective and vision, person resorts to myth and superstition, leading to imbalance and instability.

Like other aspects of *ghayb*, belief in the angels widens human perception and understanding of the world around him. It is no longer restricted to what he can see and feel, which is only a small part of reality. He feels safer in the company of these faithful creatures, fellow believers in God's Oneness, who pray constantly for human redemption, and in the comforting thought that they are there to help and guide him spiritually. Furthermore, the mere knowledge of this fact is a blessing from God to those who believe in Him and His angels.

*... and His Books and His Messengers. We make no distinction between any of His Messengers.* According to the Quranic view, belief in God's Books and Messengers follows logically and naturally from belief in God Himself. To believe in God is to believe in the truth of all that is revealed by Him, and in the honor and integrity of all the Messengers He has commissioned, and in the unity of the source of the messages they have preached. A Muslim has no notion of discrimination between God's Messengers. They all preached Islam in various versions, suited to the circumstances of the communities they addressed. Muhammad was the last and final of those Prophets and Messengers who has delivered the final, complete and universal version of the Quranic message, which will remain valid for the rest of time.

### THE ULTIMATE END

Those who truly believe in God and His angels, Books and Messengers, know well that they shall return to their Lord, and so they turn to Him in obedience and submission, seeking His mercy and forgiveness. (2:285) This submission is an expression of their faith. They heed and obey every commandment received from God in affirmation of His Oneness and in recognition of the validity of His order in every aspect of life. No submission can be sincere without adherence to God's guidance and implementation of His rule in every sphere. Faith cannot be complete if he turns his back on God's teachings and seeks moral, social, economic or political guidance elsewhere. Faith is a quality firmly entrenched in a person's heart and is only given credence when expressed in actions.

With submission and obedience to the Lord comes a feeling of inadequacy and deficiency in paying one's dues towards God. Thus believers appeal to the merciful God to overlook their failures and shortcomings: (2:285)

The appeal for forgiveness follows the assertion of total submission and obedience. It is then followed by certainty in one's fate here in this life and in the life to come. God's word is the final and ultimate truth; everything shall return to Him; He is omnipotent; His will is done and His power unchallenged; His forgiveness, mercy and grace provide the way to escape punishment for sins we commit.

This short Quranic sign (2:285) encapsulates the basic concept of the unity and integrity of Quranic belief. It is a simple and clear belief in the unity of God, His angels, His Books and Messengers, with no distinction among those Messengers whatsoever, based on total obedience and submission to God and an unshakeable faith in the Day of Judgment.

### INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Chapter continues: (2:286) It is within this framework of divine mercy and justice that a Muslim views, with total confidence and satisfaction, his obligations as God's vicegerent on earth, the challenges he faces in fulfilling those obligations, and the ultimate reward he receives. He is content in the belief that God is fully aware of his abilities and limitations, and will not overburden him or subject him to any duress or coercion. Not only does this fill a believer's heart with contentment and peace of mind, but it also inspires him to discharge his duties to the best of his ability. He is fully aware that any weakness he may experience is not because the task is excessive, but due to his own shortcomings, and this, in turn, motivates him to strengthen his resolve and strive for excellence in his actions.

The second part of the statement emphasizes individual responsibility for action: (2:286) Every individual is accountable for his own actions. No responsibility can be transferred from one person to another, nor can any person come to the aid of another in the matter of accountability. Once people appreciate this principle, each and every one of them becomes a positive and active force in society. They become responsible human beings ready to defend God's right over them, unwilling to concede it to anyone else. They will resist submission to temptation, tyranny, transgression and corruption, and submit their whole physical and spiritual being to God Almighty. Those who give in to powers other than God's, except those people subjected to duress or coercion, have only themselves to blame and shall have to face the full consequences of their actions.

### A FINAL PRAYER

As the believers understand and appreciate the significance and implications of these principles, they make their earnest plea to God. The Quran, in its fine and highly expressive style, quotes their moving, passionate prayer. The reader can almost see the multitudes of believers reciting in unison throughout the generations this prayer, evoked by a dual feeling of hope and fear: (2:286)

It is a prayer that clearly defines the relationship between the believers and their Lord. In its soft tone and poignant rhythm it implies an admission of weakness and helplessness, and a recognition of the need for God's aid, support, forgiveness and grace.

Error and forgetfulness (2:286) are two defining characteristics of human behavior. In recognition of this, a Muslim never boasts of his faults, nor deliberately exploits them, nor places himself above God's will, but always seeks God's help and turns to Him in repentance. (2:286) This plea stems from an appreciation of the gravity of

the responsibility placed upon the Muslim community as heirs and custodians of God's message to humanity. It also reflects full absorption of the lessons and experiences of earlier nations who had received God's revelations, as related in the Quran.

The plea reflects the believers' gratitude for the freedom God has provided, as well as their fear of relapse. (2:286) This is not an excuse for negligence or a justification for dereliction of duty, but a plea by the weak to the powerful, for consideration and forbearance. A conscientious believer does not wish to fail in serving his Lord and Creator, and so he asks for leniency and tolerance. While acknowledging his weakness, a true believer remains vigilant and tries to compensate for his shortcomings by seeking more of God's grace and forgiveness.

This (2:286) is the only true guarantee of success and deliverance. No matter how hard a person strives to live up to his obligations and responsibilities towards God, he will not fulfil them satisfactorily. God shows grace by treating person with mercy and forgiveness.

The Chapter closes with a statement asserting that believers put their full trust in God to come to their help in establishing His order on earth and defending it against its foes. God is the source of their strength and their ultimate triumph. (2:286) These words encapsulate the essence of the Chapter as well as the Quranic message. They reflect the mind of true believers and define the eternal relationship between them and their Supreme Lord.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across

in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

# APPENDIX 1
# SIGNS REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION
# SIGNS 22:52-55

MIGRATION: *And We sent not before you any Messenger*
*nor Prophet,*
*but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him.*
*But God nullifies what Satan casts.*
*Again, God set clear His signs.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise,* (22:52)
*for He makes what Satan casts a test*
*for those who in their hearts is a sickness*
*and their hearts, ones that harden.*
*And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* (22:53)
*And those who were given the knowledge*
*know that it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
*so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him.*
*And, truly, God is One Who Guides*
*those who believed to a straight path.* (22:54)
*And those who were ungrateful cease not to be hesitant about it*
*until the Hour approaches them suddenly*
*or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day.* (22:55)

## SIGN 28:85 REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION

*Truly, He Who imposed the Quran for **you***
*will be one who restores **you** to the place of return.*
*Say: My Lord is greater in knowledge*
*of whoever drew near guidance*
*and whoever is clearly wandering astray.* (28:85)

### COMMENTARY°

This sign is made when the Messenger had been driven out of his home town, was being chased by his people who wanted to kill him, and had not yet reached his new base, Madinah. He was at al-Juhfah, close to Makkah where the danger was very close. His eyes frequently turned to his home town which he so dearly loved. He only left it for the sake of his message. Otherwise, Makkah was the place where he had spent all his life, the place of his memories, and where his relatives lived.

In this desperate situation he is told: (28:85) God, who has given you the Quran and the task of delivering His message will not aban-

don you, or allow the unbelievers to chase you out of your place and home town. He will not allow them to impose their will on you or to oppress the believers with you. He has made the Quran binding on you so as to give you support through it at the time He judges to be right. If you are driven out today and being chased in all directions, you will certainly return with larger support.

God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to give Muhammad, His servant, this true promise at such a stressful time, so that he could go along his way comforted, confident and reassured by Gods promise. He does not entertain the slightest doubt that Gods promise will come true.

Indeed, Gods promise applies to all those who follow the same way. Anyone who suffers hardship and adversity for Gods sake and bears this with patience and perseverance will ultimately be given support against the oppressors. God will take over the battle on their behalf when they have given all that they can in fulfilment of their duty. (28:85)

He had formerly returned Moses to the land from where he fled, and with his return he saved the oppressed community and destroyed Pharaoh and his noblemen. It was the God-fearing who ultimately triumphed. Hence, you also, Muhammad, should go along your way, leaving the question of judgment between you and your people to God Almighty: *Say: My Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever drew near guidance and whoever is clearly wandering astray.*(28:85) That is, leave the matter to God and He will requite both those who follow right guidance and those who remain in error.

## SIGN 47:14 REVEALED ON THE MIGRATION

*And how many a town had there been*
*which was stronger in strength*
*than your town which drove you out,*
*that We have caused to perish?*
*And there was no one who helps them!*(47:13)

### COMMENTARY

This series of comparisons between believers and unbelievers is interrupted by a reference to the city that drove the Messenger out, comparing it with other cities and communities that perished even though they were far more powerful: (47:13) This verse is reported to have been revealed when the Messenger was on his way from Makkah to Madinah, having been driven out by the ungrateful Quraysh. It was revealed by way of consolation to him, reminding

him that those unbelievers who had opposed his message so determinedly, until he and his followers had to abandon their land and property and migrate for the sake of their faith, are truly powerless. In the end, they are subject to Gods power.

# APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

# NOTES TO THE PRELUDE AND TEXT

## PRELUDE

1. According to 19th century visitors to the Hijaz: The Taiyara or Flying Caravan goes in less time. It is a dromedary caravan, in which each person carries only his saddle bags. It usually descends (from Madinah) by the road called El Khabt, and makes Makkah on the fifth day. The stages by the Najd, or eastern route, traveled by Burton, are given as eleven, and the distance estimated at 248 miles.

2. We have no exact statement of the numbers of those who emigrated before the Messenger himself left Makkah. Eighteen months later, at the battle of Badr (when every emigrant but a very few unavoidably detained was present), the Messenger had 314 fighting-men, of whom eighty-three were Emigrants from Makkah. A few of these may have joined the Messenger after he reached Madinah.

3. See Ibn Ishaq.

## EPILOGUE

1 Tabari, i. 1227; Ibn Hisham, p. 323. The guide was Abd Allah ibn Arqat [or Al-Urayqit]. His mother was a the Qurayshite. His father was from a tribe affiliated to the Quraysh. He was still an idolater and Waidi (anticipating the era when war was waged against all idolaters) adds, but the Messenger and Abu Bakr had given him quarter, or pledge of protection.

2. During the two months elapsing between the Pledge of Aqaba and the Prophet's departure, he was kept informed of what was going on at Madinah. During this interval, some of the Madinah converts revisited Makkah, with the view, no doubt, of making further arrangements with the Messenger. These Madinah converts had thus the meri of being not only Helpers at Madinah, but also Emigrants, as having in a sense also emigrated from Makkah when they returned to Madinah.

3. Ibn Hisham, p. 324.

4. The Ghanam Clan emigrated in a body, men, women, and children, and left their houses locked: not a soul was to be seen in the quarters of the Ghanam Clan, Abu al-Bukayr, and Mazun. Utba, Abbas, and Abu Jahl passed by the dwelling-place of the Jahish Clan, and the doors were locked, and the houses deserted. Utba sighed heavily, and said: Every house, even if its peace be lengthened, at the last a bitter wind will reach it. The quarter of the Jahish Clan is left without an inhabitant! This is the work of our pestilent nephew, who has dispersed our assemblies, ruined our affairs, and made a split amongst us. Ibn Hisham, p. 317.

5. Ibn Hisham, p. 328; Tabari, i, 1236. The following is from Burckhardt: Mount Thaur. About an hour and a half south of Makkah, to the left of the road to the village of Hussaynye, is a lofty mountain of this name, higher it is said than Mount Nur. On the summit of it is a cavern, in which the Messenger and his friend Abu Bakr took refuge from the Makkans before he fled to Madinah. But he did not visit the spot, nor did Ali Bay, Begum of Bhopal's *Pilgrimage to Makkah* (1870).

The path way from Makkah is excessively rugged and difficult, the pilgrim being obliged sometimes to crawl over the great rocks on his hands and knees. The entrance to the cave is still preserved in what is believed to be its original state and the pilgrim acquires merit by forcing himself with difficulty, as the Messenger must have done, through the aperture, which is, not more than 1 1/2 span in breadth; but a wide passage

has been opened out at the other end of the cave. The hills are wild and bare; huge masses of rock lie scattered about; and nothing green is in sight, save occasionally wild thorny bushes.

6. Ibn Hisham, p. 329.

7. Ibn Hisham, p. 231.

8. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp 212-220.

9. Tabari, p 193: They took this road after passing Thaniat al-Marrah. It lay between the Amq and Ruha roads. The names of the stages are preserved, but few of the places are now identifiable.

10. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* pp 212-220: The Wadi al-Aqiq has a north-westerly direction and discharges its waters into al-Ghaba, the basin in which collects the drainage of the Madinah plain. The travelers appear to have proceeded along the valley eastward for some space until they reached Aljathjatha, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 44.

11. The approach to Madinah described in the 19th century, ii, pp 18-27: The mountains are composed of inhospitable rocks, pinnacle-shaped, of granite below, and in the upper parts, fine limestone; but about the Wadi al Aqiq the surface is black scoriaceous basalt. The author says that all the rocky places about Madinah, as well as the lower ridge of the northern mountainous chain, are covered by a layer of volcanic rock; it is of a bluish black color, very porous, yet heavy and hard, not glazed, like Schlacken, and contains frequently small white substances in its pores of the size of a pins head, which I never found crystallized. The plain has a completely black color from this rock, and the pieces with which it is overspread. I met with no lava, although the nature of the ground seemed strongly to indicate the neighborhood of a volcano. The author adds the account of a volcanic eruption, CE 654, the stream of lava from which passed not far from Madinah, on the east; but he attributes the volcanic substances about the town and the valley Aqiq to some earlier eruption: vol. iii. 858-360. Also, Burton, ii. 30.

12. Quba is about ten miles south, southeast of Madinah.

13. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 44.

14. From the Awsite tribe which inhabited Quba, the quarter was called Aliya or Upper Madinah from its more elevated position. Upper Madinah included Quba and Khatma and some other tribes with the Jewish settlements of the Qurayza and Nadir. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, pp 101-282.

15. It was Monday Rabi I, H. When the Messenger arrived he was on Abu Bakr's camel. Few persons present knew which was the Prophet, till the suns rays fell upon him, and then Abu Bakr rose to place him in the shade. Out of this has grown the tradition that the people of Madinah recognized the Messenger from his body casting no shadow. Abu Bakr was known to some of the citizens, as he used to pass through Madinah on his mercantile trips to Syria, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

16. It can be traveled by swift dromedaries in five days. Burton, ii. pp 329-331.

17. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

18. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45 and p. 299; Hishami, p. 172. The bachelor refugees were accommodated in great numbers in Saad's house, so that it went by the name of the bachelors hostelry: he was himself a bachelor, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 229; Tabari, p .200.

19. That is to say, his wife remained there, and he used to visit her there when it was her turn to enjoy his society; for he had other wives. Kharija belonged to the Harith

ibn Khazraj clan. He was joined in brotherhood (the practice will be explained below) to Abu Bakr, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 212. Others say that Abu Bakr first alighted at the house of Khubayb or Hubayb ibn al Asaf.

20. Some accounts extend Muhammad's residence at Quba to two weeks. The discrepancy arises from a diversity in the traditional date of departure from Makkah; some giving the second, others the twelfth, of the Rabi I as the day of arrival at Quba. Those who adopt the former date are obliged to add ten days to the stay at Quba, in order to adjust their chronology, and hit the right day of the Prophet's entry into Madinah. The discrepancy in so late an event, and one so public, is not creditable to tradition. It shows what elements of uncertainty, supposition, and calculation, are mingled as fact with what is really good tradition.

21. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 47.

22. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

23. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45; Hishami, p. 172; Tabari, p. 215.The Friday Mosque or al-Anikah—of the Sand heaps—is in the valley near Quba where the Messenger prayed and preached on the first Friday after his flight from Makkah.

24. Tabari, vol. 7, p. 2.

25. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

26. Hishami, p. 173.

27. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45. Abu Ayyub or Khalid ibn Zayd used to tell a story that he and his wife accidentally broke a water pot in the upper story. Having wiped up the water as best they could with their clothes, hurried down to the Messengers apartment in great alarm lest any of it should have dropped on him. Hishami, p. 174.

28. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 45.

29. The orphans were called Sahal and Suhayl. They belonged to the Malik branch of the Najjar. The Messengers relationship was with the Adi branch. Asad was one of the leaders. He is said to have held regular Friday services on this spot before the Mes sengers arrival. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46, 297.

30. According to a 19th century visitor to Madinah: The court in the time of Ib Jubayr contained fifteen date trees. They are now reduced to a dozen which are contained in a railed-in and watered space called: Fatima's Garden. It also contains the remains of a venerable lote-tree. The Prophets well is close by.

31. He was a servant of Abbas who gave him to the Messenger who is said to have freed him on his bringing tidings of the conversion of Abbas. he was also called Aslam, *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46.

32. *Kitab al-Waqidi*, p. 46. Tabari relates that Abdullah ibn Arykat, the guide, brought back to Makkah news of Abu Bakr having reached Madinah on which is family set out to join him. Zayd probably went back to Makkah with this guide.

33. From October till April, Burton, ii. 172; Burkhardt, 398.

34. Burkhardt, 322.

35. This pestilence was so universal that at one time the Messenger is said to have been almost the only one at prayers able to stand up; but he said: The formal prayer of one who sits is worth only half the prayer of him that stands, so they all made violent efforts to stand up. Hishami, p. 206.

36. Ali Shariati, *Ummat and Imamate.*

37. When Umar compiled the registers in Syria, Bilal had gone there and remained as a combatant. He asked him with whom he wished to be grouped and he said with

Abu Ruwayha. I will never leave him, for the Messenger established brotherhood between us. So he was linked with him and the register of the Abyssinians was linked with Khatham because of Bilal's position with them, and this arrangement continues to this day in Syria.

38. This was probably removed when the *qibla* was turned towards the south. It corresponded with the Salam Gate, afterwards opened out to the north.

39. In later years, as the number of wives increased, the Messenger provided for each a room, or house, on the same side of the mosque.

40. A building 150 feet square must, in the then simple state of Arab society, have been viewed as a spacious edifice. It was amply sufficient for all the purposes of the Messenger, religious and political, as well for a house of prayer as for a place of council and assembly, and a hall of audience.

41. See 61:14, 3:52, 8:72, 9:100, 9:117.

42. See 2:143.

43. See Ibn Ishaq.

44. Hishami, p. 205.

45. Ibn Ishaq thus describes this class: Then the Jewish doctors were filled with hatred and envy of Muhammad, because God had chosen a Prophet from amongst the Arabs. And there joined themselves unto these Jews certain men of the Aws and Khazraj, who were in reality little removed from the idolatry of their fathers and rejection of the true faith, only that Islam had by its prevalence overpowered them—the mass having already gone over to it. So they ostensibly joined Islam, and took it as a shield unto them from death; but in secret they were traitors, and their hearts were with the Jews in their rejection of the Prophet. Hishami, p. 183.

46. This text is taken from A. Guillaume, *The Life of the Messenger — A Translation of Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1955; pp 231-233. Numbering added.

47. Tabari: In the territory of Juhayna.

48. The Messenger did not send the Madinah Helpers on any hostile expedition against the Quraysh idolaters until they had warred with him at Badr and the reason is that they had pledged themselves to protect him only at their homes, *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p. 48.

49. The names of the deserters are Miqdad and Utba, both Quraysh. Miqdad carried the standard in the next expedition under Saad. *Kitab al-Waqidi,* p. 98; Hishami, p 207, Tabari, p. 226.

## NOTES TO THE TEXT

1. Ali Shariati, *Fatima is Fatima.*
2. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
3. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*

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Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 15

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 1 of the Revelation (2 AH/623-624 CE)

Library of Islam

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 15*

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# PREFACE

## EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *The Year 1* to *The Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections (*ruku*) (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter in chronological order). The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation.

Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators. Then, the history at the time of the specific Quranic section in question is given. Finally, at the end of each section (*ruku*) there is an exercise and assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they learn HOW the Quran teaches thinking.

*Book Year 15*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 2 AH/ca. July 5, 623 CE-June 23, 624 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates: *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr* and *Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.*

The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, Book 30 has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (*tafsir*) by Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* (available online) in this *Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series* is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to

think using self-realization (*tahqiq*) and critical thinking (*furqan*) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran*. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (*Book 25*, *Book 26*, *Book 27* and *Book 28*) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and

"ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic sign that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: *anta* where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the

Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By indicating the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (*tawhid*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), virtuous conduct (*birr*) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy (*'azm*) and courage, persevering in goodness (*sabara*), love (*hubb*) or empathic altruism (*ihsan*) and being fair and just (*rashad*). The signs (*ayat*) in each section (*ruku*) teach the one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the var-

ious individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (*sira*). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### The Nine Intellectual Standards

1. Logic (reasonable: *'aqala, 'aql*)
2. Definitiveness (to be precise: *muhkama*)
3. Connectedness (containing complexities and interrelationships: (*muqtarin*)
4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: *sadid*)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial, to be significant: *ahl*)
6. Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints: *'dhara'a*)
7. Right Judgment (*rushd*)
8. Clarity (understandable, to be clear: *tabayyana*)
9. Being Fair and Just (*'aql*, right-minded (*rashad*))

### The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies

1. **Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective (recollect, bear in mind, take for granted: *tadhakkur*)**
   - Thinking Independently
   - Developing Insight Into Ego-centricity or Socio-centricity
   - Exploring Thoughts Underlying Feelings and Feelings Underlying Thoughts
   - Developing Intellectual Curiosity
2. **Generating a Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective: (consider: *ra'a*)**
   - Clarifying Issues or Conclusions

CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

**3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)**
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

**4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: *BASIRAH*)**
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT FACTS
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

**5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: *TABASSUR*)**
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

**6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)**
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS
DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

**7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)**

**8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: *TADABBUR*)**
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

**THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL**

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of

view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvan-

tages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*, GOODNESS, *BIRR*)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (*'AZM*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *HUBB*)
7. FAIRNESS (*NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA*)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in *A History of Muslim Philosophy* and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

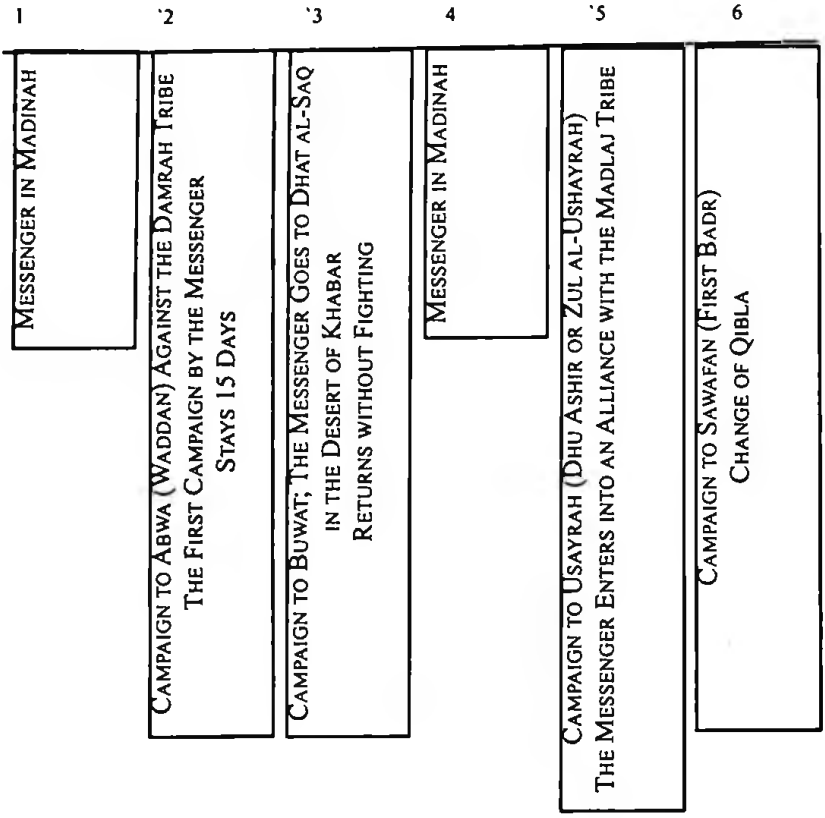
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran*, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 15*

## TIMELINE

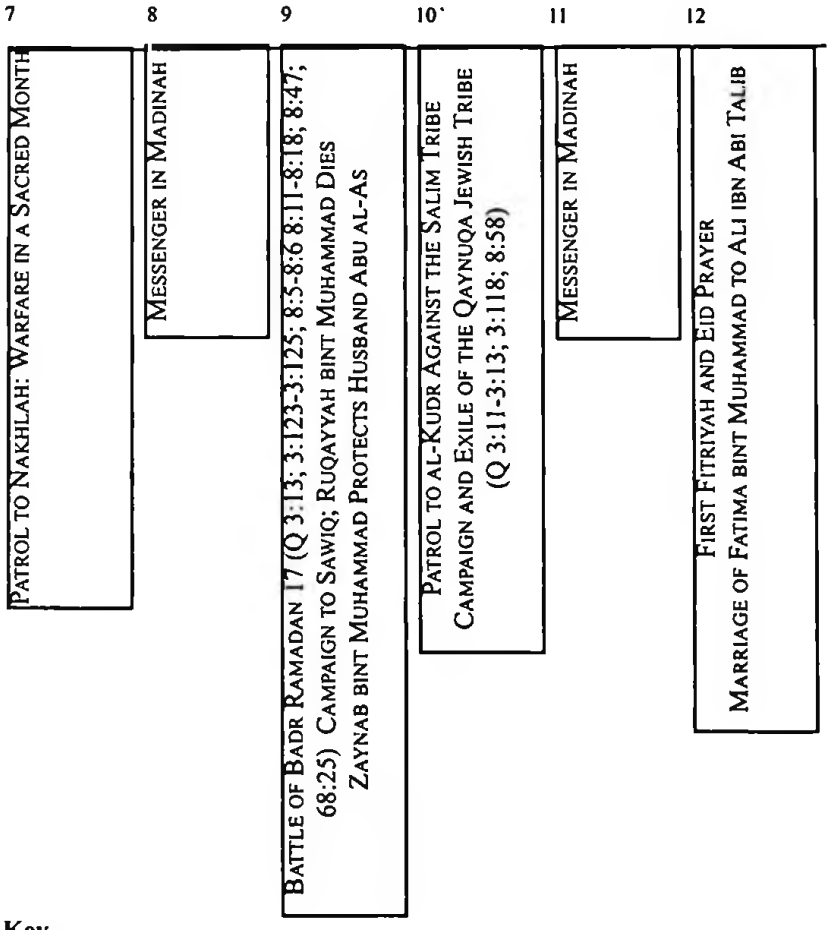



**Key**
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS
A COMPANION TO LEAD

# Preview *Book Year 15*

## Timeline




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 15* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. Here, in *Book Year 15*, we include Lesson 88 and Quran Chapter 8 which is the 88th Chapter revealed.

## LESSON 88(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

### QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking. God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the Creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

*ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

**WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?**

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
## SIGNS 8:1-8:10

**Madinah:** *They ask **you** about the spoils of war.*
*Say: The spoils of war belong to God*
*and the Messenger so be God-conscious*
*and make things right among you*
*and obey God and his Messenger*
*if you had been ones who believe.* (8:1)
*The ones who believe are only those whose hearts*
*took notice when God was remembered.*
*When His signs were recounted to them,*
*their belief increased and they put their trust in the Lord—* (8:2)
*those who perform the formal prayer*
*and spend out of what We provided them,* (8:3)
*those, they are the ones who truthfully believe.*
*For them are degrees with their Lord*
*and forgiveness and generous provision.* (8:4 )
*Just as **your** Lord brought **you** out from **your** house with The Truth,*
*and, truly, a group of people among the ones who believe*
*were the ones who dislike it.* (8:5)
*They dispute with **you** about The Truth—after it became clear*
*as if they had been driven to death and they look on at it.* (8:6)
*And when God promises you, one of the two sections:*
*It will, truly, be for you.*
*And you wish that the one that is unarmed should be yours.*
*And God wants that He verify The Truth by His Words*
*and to sever the last remnant of the ones who are ungrateful* (8:7)
*that He may verify*
*The Truth and render the falsehood untrue*
*even if the ones who sin disliked it.* (8:8)
*Mention when you cry for help from your Lord*
*and He responded to you:*
*Truly, I am One Who Reinforces you with a thousand angels,*
*ones who come one after another.* (8:9)
*And did God make this as good tidings for you*
*so that with it your hearts will be at rest in it?*
*And there is no help but from God alone.*
*Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* (8:10)

### COMMENTARY°
#### OVERVIEW

This opening passage of the Chapter provides God's ruling over

the booty that Muslims may gain in their campaigns to serve God's cause. Those who fought in the first major battle that took place at Badr between the newly-established Muslim state and the pagan Arabs disputed among themselves over its distribution. God gives here His ruling and reminds them of their need to fear and obey Him, and also obey His Messenger. He reminds them of their faith and that they need to live up to its values.

God also reminds them that they had hoped to gain a trade caravan, but God wanted something much better for them: strength and victory. He further puts before their eyes the factors that made the battle go in their favor when they were facing an enemy who was far superior to them in numerical strength and equipment. They were given support by angels. Rain gave them water to drink, and made the terrain firmer so that they were not impeded by a sandy battleground. Slumber overwhelmed them to give them calmness and reassurance. Their enemies were overwhelmed with fear, and ended up suffering stern punishment.

The believers are commanded to remain steadfast in every battle, no matter how strong and unassailable their enemies may initially appear to be. It is God who plans, acts and kills. They are merely a means with which He accomplishes His will. He may do with them what He pleases.

The Chapter then ridicules the ungrateful who, before the battle, were keen to precipitate God's will, appealing to God to bring about the defeat of the party which was far more astray and ready to sever relations of kinship. He tells them that their appeal is granted. It also warns the believers against behaving like the hypocrites who hear God's message but do not listen or respond to it.

The passage concludes with appeals to the believers to respond to God and His Messenger when he calls on them to follow the path that gives them life, although it may appear at first sight to involve death and being killed in battle. It reminds them of the days when they were few in number, oppressed, living in fear, but God gave them shelter and granted them support and victory. It promises them that God will give them a clear criterion if they continue to fear Him. That will be in addition to forgiveness of their sins and abounding grace that makes all spoils of war appear petty and trivial.

### DISPUTE OVER THE SPOILS OF WAR

Some of us may wonder at the fighters at Badr disputing over the spoils. These fighters were the followers of the Quranic message in its very early days. They belonged either to the Emigrants, who migrated from Makkah, their hometown, leaving behind all their pos-

sessions for no reason other than to serve God's cause, or to the Helpers of Madinah who received the Emigrants and shared with them their homes and property, denying them nothing. These were the ones who are described by God in the Quran as ones: *And those who had taken their abodes and had abided in belief before them, love them who emigrated to them and they find not in their breasts any need for what the emigrants were given and hold them in greater favor over themselves even though they themselves had been in destitution. And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then those are the ones who prosper.* (59:9)

Being given something of the spoils of war was in itself a testimony for having fought hard. Those people were keen to have such a testimony from God's Messenger and from God Himself, in the first major battle which saw them triumph over the ungrateful. That keenness overshadowed something of great importance, namely, to maintain kindly relations and to promote bonds of brotherhood among themselves. When these signs were revealed, they recognized their fault.

God gives them a verbal and practical lesson. The whole question of dividing the spoils of war was taken away from them and given to the Messenger himself. Then He revealed His verdict on how all spoils of war should be shared out. It was no longer the right over which they might dispute. It was something that was given to them by God's grace, and the Messenger would divide it among them in accordance with his Lord's instructions. In addition to this edifying experience, they were given directives that begin with this opening sign: **(8:1)**

### ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF BELIEVERS

Thus, the opening sign of the Chapter reminds the hearts of those who disputed over the booty that they should maintain God-consciousness. Glory be to the Creator who knows all hearts' secrets. It is only the fear of God and the desire to earn His pleasure in this life, as well as in the life to come, that turns human hearts away from valuing the riches and pleasures of this world and disputing over them, even though such a dispute should also have an overtone of having a testimony for fighting hard to serve God's cause. A heart that does not turn in its totality to God, conscious of incurring His anger and seeking to earn His pleasure, will never be able to get rid of the temptation of worldly comforts and riches. God-consciousness is what makes people's hearts willing to be guided with ease and humility so that they can maintain friendly relations and promote bonds of brotherhood between them: **(8:1)** It is through God-consciousness

that they are led to total obedience of God and His Messenger: **(8:1)**

The first aspect of obedience in this connection is to submit to His ruling over the spoils of war. It no longer belonged to any one of the fighters. The entire booty belongs to God and His Messenger, and they have sole discretion over its use. Those believers could only submit to God's ruling and the Messenger's division of the booty with easy hearts and happy minds. They also needed to maintain their brotherly relationship which nothing could weaken, provided that *you are true believers*. **(8:1)**

Faith must have a practical example to testify to its applicability and to demonstrate how it works. The Messenger says: Faith does not come about through wishful thinking or maintaining appearances. True faith is that which establishes roots in people's hearts and to which action gives credence. This is the reason for frequently repeating this final phrase in the Quran in order to stress the meaning of faith revealed to the Messenger. It thus becomes a practical definition of faith so that it is no longer thought to be a mere verbal statement that has no practical correlative.

This is followed by an outline of the qualities of true faith, as God wants it to be: **(8:2-8:4)** The Quranic style is extremely accurate in its choice of words, in order to provide a very clear statement of the meaning it wants to impart. Here we have the phrase *"only those"* in order to limit the meaning of having faith to those who have these qualities. When we have such a limiting expression, no one could try to give a subjective interpretation of these qualities, claiming for example that they refer to people with complete faith. Had God meant it that way He would have said it.

What we have here is a highly definitive statement which tells us that only the people who have such qualities and who act and feel in this way are believers. Those who do not have all these qualities are not believers. At the end of these opening signs, a repeat statement is given to re-emphasize this fact: **(8:4)** People who are not truly believers do not believe at all. Quranic expressions and statements interpret one another. God says elsewhere in the Quran: *What may differ with the truth other than error.* Therefore, only error stands opposite to the truth. Those who do not belong to the truly believers cannot be described as having faith, though it may be less than complete. A definitive Quranic statement cannot be interpreted at will in such an ambiguous manner.

The early Muslims realized that a person who does not have such qualities and whose actions do not conform to these descriptions is not a believer at all. God describes the believers by saying: *True believers are only those whose hearts are filled with awe whenever*

*God is mentioned.* Therefore, they do the duties He requires them to do. And whose faith is strengthened whenever His revelations are recited to them. They feel the truth of these revelations as they listen to them. In their Lord do they place their trust. They rely only on Him, seeking nothing from anyone else.

As we proceed with our commentary, we will see clearly that without such qualities, faith does not exist. It is not a matter of having complete or less than complete faith, but whether faith exists or not.

It is a feeling of awe **(8:2)** that fills a believer's heart when God's name is mentioned in connection with any duty. The believer feels God's greatness and majesty, and he remembers God's greatness and how imperfect his own attitude is. All this provides strong motivation for him to act. It is a situation that leaves its effect on people's hearts, and they need to appeal to God for comfort. This is exactly what a believer experiences when he is reminded of God in connection with any order. He will then do what he is bid and refrain from what he is forbidden.

A believing heart **(8:2)** is sure to find in the Quranic signs what gives him strength of faith and reassurance. The Quran deals directly with human hearts, without any intermediary. Only ingratitude can place a barrier between human hearts and the Quran. When the barrier is removed by faith, a believing heart will begin to appreciate the Quran and watch his faith grow stronger until he finds complete reassurance. Just as the Quranic effect strengthens the faith of a believer, a believing heart is the only one to appreciate the Quranic directives. Therefore, this fact is often stressed in statements like: *Surely, in this there are signs for believers.* And *Certainly, in this there are signs for people who believe.*

### PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

The Messenger's Companions were models of true believers. The Quran had a special effect on them, enhanced by the general atmosphere in their community in which people tried their best to practically live by the Quran and not confine themselves to an intellectual appreciation of its meaning. They lived with their Lord and with the Quran which was being revealed. That was great indeed, taking place in a remarkable period of human history. Those Companions of the Messenger were thus able to appreciate the Quran in their own exemplary way. The fact that they conducted their own practical affairs, guided by the Quranic directives made their own appreciation of the Quran both practical and highly effective. While no repeat of the first aspect is possible in the sense that no human community could receive the Quran directly anymore, yet the type of interaction with

the Quran that characterized the community of the Messenger's Companions can certainly be repeated.

It only requires a community of believers to try to establish this Quranic message in practical life just like the first Muslim community did. Such a community of believers will certainly have the same type of appreciation of the Quran and will have their faith increased whenever it is recited, because, to start with, it is a believing community. For them, true faith requires that they take action to establish this religion in practice after *jahiliyyah* had regained control over the whole world. To them, faith is not confined to wishful thinking, but it means something that is deeply rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given through action.

The way this statement **(8:2)** is phrased signifies that they rely on God alone, associating no one with Him from whom to request help. This is the practical meaning of pure faith in God's Oneness, addressing all worship completely and purely to Him alone. It is not possible for any person to have true faith in God as the only Lord in the universe and yet rely on someone other than Him. Those who find themselves relying on someone other than God must first of all search in their own hearts to discover whether they truly believe in God.

To rely on God alone does not prevent anyone from taking action or precaution. A believer takes precautions against any eventuality as a sign of believing in God and obeying Him, as He has ordered us to do so. But a true believer does not consider his actions and precautions as the only causes to give the effects they produce, to the extent that he relies only on such actions and precautions. What produces these effects, and indeed brings their causes into being, is God's will. In a believer's heart, the cause and effect relationship is not self-enforcing. A believer takes action in order to obey God. But the results and effects come about by God's own will which is totally independent from the causes leading to it. Such will is determined by God alone. In this way, a believer does not feel controlled by such actions and causes. Nevertheless, he tries his best to take every precaution hoping that he will be rewarded for doing so in obedience to God.

Modern *jahiliyyah* which describes itself as scientific has tried hard to emphasize the inevitability of natural laws, in order to deny God's will and whatever God has chosen not to make known to us. All its attempts and the manipulation of all means at its disposal have shown it to be powerless in the face of God's will. It was eventually forced to admit its inability to make future predictions with any degree of certainty or inevitability. It then resorted to what it terms the

theory of probabilities in the material world. Whatever used to be inevitable in its lexicon has come to be considered only probable.

*Ghayb*, which is the Quranic term for what lies beyond the reach of human perception, remains a sealed secret. Furthermore, God's will remains the only true certainty. The only inevitable law is that expressed in the Quranic statement: ***You are not informed so that perhaps God would cause to evoke something after that affair.*** (65:1) This statement refers to the fact that God's will is free, unrestrained. It lies behind the natural laws which God has set into operation to control the universe according to His will.

When a person has rid his mind of the pressure of apparent causes, it is left with the only alternative of relying completely on God. It realizes that God's will is the only cause for all that happens, and that this is the only true certainty. Apparent causes produce only probabilities. With this truth, the Quranic message enables the human mind to bridge a great gulf. Modern *jahiliyyah* has spent three centuries in order to arrive at the first intellectual stage in bridging that gulf. But it has not made any progress towards bridging it in as far as beliefs are concerned, or with regard to the far-reaching practical effects that result from it, in accepting God's will and dealing with it as apparent causes and forces.

Bridging that gulf means the total liberation of humanity, intellectually, politically, socially and morally and, above all, in matters of faith. It is not possible for the human being to achieve this freedom if he were to remain under the yoke of inevitabilities that would undoubtedly lead him to submission to the will of human beings or the will of nature. Any inevitability other than that of God's will serves as a basis for submission to something else. Therefore, the Quran emphasizes the need to rely on God alone, making it an essential condition of faith. With the Quranic message, the basic concept of belief is a complete whole. It must interact as such in the practical model which this religion of Islam provides for human life.

In this quality we find a visible aspect of faith, after we had seen some of its invisible ones. **(8:3)** Faith is defined as that which is deeply rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given through action. Action is, therefore, the practical aspect of faith which appears to all people signifying that the person who takes such action is a person of faith. Regular attendance to prayer does not signify its mere performance. It is the performance which befits a servant standing in the presence of his Master. It is not the mere recitation, movement, bowing and prostration when one's mind is totally oblivious to what one is actually doing. In its proper performance, prayer is a true evidence of faith.

This **(8:3)** applies to the purifying alms (*zakat*) and other forms of charity. These people spend on others some of what We have provided them with. It is God who is the provider, and whatever they donate is part of His provision. Quranic statements are always rich in their connotations and the impressions they leave. Those people have not created their wealth. It is only part of the countless abundance which God has provided for them. Whatever they may spend is only part of it. They retain the rest; for whatever they have has been provided for them by God alone.

These are the qualities God mentions here as signifying faith. They include believing in God's Oneness, responding to the mentioning of His Name, being influenced by His revelations, placing one's trust only in Him, offering formal prayer to Him alone and donating to others some of what He has provided for them. These qualities do not represent the details of faith as they have been explained elsewhere in the Quran; but they deal with a certain situation when the Messenger's companions disputed with one another over the spoils of war, allowing ill feelings to develop between themselves. Therefore, only those qualities of the believers which are particularly relevant to dealing with such a situation are mentioned here. At the same time, they outline certain essential qualities of proper faith. If all these qualities are lacking, a person cannot be a true believer. It is not necessary to enlist all the qualities of faith here. The Quranic method of cultivating the finer human qualities with the Quran tackles only those aspects and provides only those directives that are useful in dealing with certain practical situations. Besides, the Quran provides a practical method for human life, not a mere theory that it wishes to present. Therefore, the final comment on these qualities is as follows: **(8:4)**

Here we find highlighted those qualities of true believers which are particularly relevant to the situation prevailing at the time of their revelation. The Chapter also refers to the dispute over the spoils of war that took place after the battle, stating that people with such qualities of true believers shall have generous provisions given to them by their Lord. Thus, all aspects of the situation are covered, whether they appeared in practical attitudes or were confined to feelings only. At the same time, this passage makes it very clear that a person who does not have any of these qualities is certainly not a true believer.

The first Muslim community was being taught that faith has an essence which must be felt by every believer. **(8:4)** Faith is not merely a claim or a verbal statement, or wishful thinking.

## BETTER THAN THE BELIEVER'S DESIRE

Now that the Chapter has established at the outset the nature of true faith, it refers to the battle which allowed the Muslim community to gain the spoils of war that became the subject of their dispute to the extent that their behavior was not all that becoming. The Chapter refers in a general way to the various events that took place, and how the Messenger's companions felt and behaved in response. This reference makes it clear that the Messenger's Companions were merely the means through which God's will was accomplished. It is clear that all those events, and the situation that arose from them, including the spoils of war over which they disputed, were only made possible through God's will, His planning and the help He gave to those believers. What they had hoped to achieve from this battle was only a small, limited gain. It could not be compared to what God wanted for them, to be the ones through whom the great divide between truth and falsehood is established in the heavens and on earth. It is this great criterion which is the main preoccupation of the Supreme Society in heaven as well as the preoccupation of the people on earth and human history generally. The Chapter reminds them that a group of them went into the battle against their preferred choice. Another party did not like that the spoils of war should be divided among them. Now God wanted them to realize that what they had preferred is not to be compared with what God prefers or what He chooses to accomplish. He knows the results of all matters.

God willed that the spoils of war be totally left to God and His Messenger, **(8:5-8:14)** so that the Messenger would distribute them equally among them after retaining one-fifth which would be spent in a way to be outlined later in the Chapter.

That would ensure that the community of believers would no longer entertain any thoughts about the spoils of war, which would mean that no dispute would ever arise over them. The Messenger would have complete authority over their distribution, in accordance with what God taught him. Thus, those who actually took the spoils of war and found themselves receiving the same shares as others would not entertain any ill feeling.

God gives them this example of what they wanted for themselves and what He wanted for them, and accomplished through them. Thus, they know now that God's choice is best for them, whether it relates to the spoils of war or to anything else. People know only what they have in front of them. Their knowledge does not stretch far beyond their own immediate world. The example given is taken from their practical situation, the battle that gave them their booty. What did they hope for when they went into battle? What

did God want to establish for and through them? How do the two compare? The gulf between the two eventualities is wide indeed, stretching far beyond what human beings can visualize. **(8:5-8:6)**

Giving authority over the spoils of war to God and His Messenger, their subsequent distribution equally among all soldiers, despite expressed reservations by some of them is similar in a sense to the fact that God brought His Messenger forth from his home to fight the well-armed host when some of the believers were very reluctant to go into such a battle.

Fighting was unwelcome among many in the early community.. The Quran describes their attitude in these words: *As if they had been driven to death and they are looking at it.* **(8:6)** That was the situation when the truth was clearly manifest, and when they knew that God had promised them that one of the two enemy hosts would fall to them. They realized that they had no choice left after one host, the trade caravan, had escaped them. Their only choice was to confront the other host, the idolaters' army, which God willed to fall to them, regardless of the disparity between the two parties in terms of fighters and military equipment.

This is a situation where human weakness is exposed in the face of imminent danger. Here we see the effect of actual confrontation, despite firm conviction. The picture the Quran paints should make us more realistic when we assess the requirements of conviction in the face of practical pressures. We must not overlook human ability at the time of confrontation. We must not despair when people generally, including our own group, shake as they face danger, although they are true believers at heart. It is sufficient that people proceed along the proper way and face up to the danger, making a solid stand after the initial hesitation. Those people were the ones who fought the Battle of Badr and concerning whom the Messenger said: How can you tell? It may be that God has looked at the people of Badr and said: Do as you please, for I have forgiven you all. That is all that may be said here.

### AN AIM SUPERIOR TO ALL HUMAN HOPES

The Muslim group continued to wish that they would have to face the less powerful host, rather than the idolaters' army. **(8:7)** This was their wish, but God wanted a different prospect for them. He wanted to accomplish a different purpose through them: **(8:7-8:8)**

By His grace, God did not want the encounter to be one that brings materialistic gains. He wanted it to be a full-fledged battle between truth and falsehood, so that the truth could triumph and be well established, and falsehood be proven and seen as false. He wanted

the ungrateful to be routed, suffering heavy losses and many of them to be taken captive. Thus, they would be humiliated and their power greatly weakened while the Quranic message would remain hoisted high and God's will enforced. In this way, God gives power to the Muslim community which implements the code of living God has revealed. Through such implementation, the principle of God's Oneness is firmly established, while tyranny and falsehood are completely shattered. God wanted all this to be earned and merited through endeavor and hard struggle both in practical life and on the battlefield, not to be a gift granted haphazardly, for God does not do anything haphazardly.

Yes, God willed that this Muslim community should become a nation and a state having power and authority. He wanted it to measure its true power against that of its enemies, and to gain the upper hand using only a portion of its power. Thus, it would learn that victory is not guaranteed by numerical strength, heavy armament, material power or wealth. True victory is guaranteed by the strength of the bond that links believers' hearts and minds with God's might which overpowers everything. God's will was such that all this should come through practical experience, and not be limited to a conceptual belief. Such an experience would give the small Muslim community a guiding line for its whole future. Every Muslim group, whenever and wherever it lives, can be certain that it can overcome its enemies, no matter how greatly superior they may be in numbers and equipment. This fact could not have been so profoundly impressed on the believers' minds without that experience of a decisive battle between faith and tyranny.

Anyone can see at any time the vast gulf between what that small Muslim community wanted for itself and what it thought to be of benefit on the one hand, and the much better outcome God willed for it on the other. As he appreciates the difference, he knows how mistaken people are when they think that they can choose for themselves better than what God chooses for them, or when they are deeply hurt by taking some small risks or experiencing minor harm to which God may expose them, while it is calculated to bring them unthinkable and immeasurable benefit.

How do the hopes of that Muslim community compare with what God willed and chose for them? Had they been given the trade caravan, or the band with little power, their encounter would have been nothing more than a small raid that gained them a caravan. The Battle of Badr, on the other hand, remains and will always be remembered in history as a story of faith, a profound victory that distinguishes truth from falsehood. It is the story of the triumph of truth,

supported by a small, poorly equipped host over enemies that boasted great superiority in numbers and equipment. It is the story of the triumph of hearts that have been purged from their own weakness and that have established a firm bond with God. Not only so, but it is the story of the triumph of a small band of hearts that included quite a few who were reluctant to fight. As these hearts still had firm conviction of the soundness of the values of the message they believed in and were certain where true power lay, they were able to triumph first over their own desires. They went into the battle when every indication showed the side of falsehood to be overpowering, but through faith that community overturned the scales and the truth was triumphant.

In all its particular circumstances, the Battle of Badr sets a great example in human history, setting out the law that brings victory or defeat and revealing the true factors of each. It is an open book to be read by all generations at all times and in all places, giving the same message that remains always true. It speaks of a law that God willed to remain operative as long as the heavens and the earth remain in existence. The Muslim community that struggles today for the rebirth of the Quranic message on earth, after the whole world has succumbed to *jahiliyyah*, should reflect deeply on Badr and the decisive values it presents. This community must reflect on the great difference between what human beings may wish for themselves and what God may will for them: **(8:7-8:8)**

The Muslim community which tries today to re-establish the Quranic message in human life may not have attained the standard of that small Muslim community that fought the Battle of Badr. However, the standards, values and general directives that applied to Badr, its circumstances and outcome, as well as the Quranic comments on that Battle, remain applicable to it. They point out the attitude the Muslim community should adopt at every stage, because those standards, values and directives remain valid as long as life continues in the heavens and on earth, and as long as there remains on this planet a Muslim community facing up to *jahiliyyah* and trying to re- establish the Quranic message in practice.

### AN APPEAL AND A RESPONSE

At this point, the Chapter recalls the atmosphere of the Battle of Badr, the circumstances leading to it and the attitudes adopted prior to the Battle and during it. It paints a complete picture of the conditions that the Muslims were in, what God planned for them and how the victory they attained was part of His planning. In the inimitable style of the Quran, the whole situation is brought back to them with

its different scenes, events, feelings and reactions so that they could relive it, but this time in the light of Quranic directives. Thus they are able to appreciate its true dimensions that go far beyond Badr, the Arabian Peninsula and the whole earth to stretch across the universe and reach up to the Highest Society. It also goes beyond the day of Badr, Arabian and human history in general, and beyond this life to reach to the time of reckoning in the life to come and the perfect reward. The Muslim community is thus enabled to appreciate its value in God's sight, and how He values the moves and actions of individuals and communities in the service of their faith: **(8:9-8:14)**

The whole battle is conducted by God's will and according to His careful planning. The actors are God's soldiers whom He directs and commands. The whole scene is painted so vividly through the Quranic expressions that bring it alive as if it is happening here and now.

Their Lord, then, answered their appeal and informed them that He had decided to reinforce them with a thousand angels moving in close ranks. **(8:9-8:10)** Greatly significant as this decision is, indicating the great value assigned by God to those believers and the Quranic message, God does not want the Muslims to understand that there is a mechanical process of a direct cause leading to a definite effect. The whole matter is referred back to Him so that the Muslims maintain the right beliefs and concepts. This whole response, enforcement, and the revelation announcing it were merely given as happy news to reassure the believers' hearts. Victory itself comes only from God. This is a basic fact of faith restated here so that Muslims do not attach undue importance to any particular cause or factor.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.
I know that I think within a vocabulary.
I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 88(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
## SIGNS 8:11-8:19

**Madinah:** *Mention when a sleepiness enwraps you as a safety from Him. He sends down water from heaven for you and He purifies you by it and causes to be put away from you the defilement of Satan. He invigorates your hearts and makes your feet firm by it.* (8:11)

*Mention when thy Lord reveals to the angels: I am, truly, with you, so make those who believed firm. I will cast alarm into the hearts of those who were ungrateful. So strike above their necks and strike each of their fingers from them.* (8:12)

*That is because they made a breach with God and His Messenger.*
*And to whomever makes a breach with God and His Messenger;*
*then, truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (8:13)
*That is for you, so experience it,*
*and, truly, for the ones who are ungrateful,*
*the punishment of the fire.* (8:14)
*O those who believed!*
*When you met those who were ungrateful marching to battle,*
*then, turn not your backs to them in flight.* (8:15)
*And whoever turns his back that Day—but one who withdraws*
*from fighting for a purpose—or one who moves aside to another*
*faction, he, surely, drew the burden of the anger from God*
*and his place of shelter will be hell.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (8:16 )
*Then, you kill them not, but God killed them.*
*And **you** had not thrown when **you** had thrown but God threw.*
*He tries by experiment the ones who believe*
*with a fairer trial from Him.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:17)
*That is so, and, truly, God is One Who Makes Frail*
*the cunning of the ones who are ungrateful.* (8:18 )
*If you seek a judgment then, surely, drew near to you the victory.*
*And if you refrain yourselves, then, that would be better for you.*
*And if you revert, We will revert. And your factions will not avail*
*you at all even if they were many.*
*And God is with the ones who believe.* (8:19 )

## COMMENTARY°

This, then, the task assigned to them. **(8:11-8:19)** We need not go into any details beyond this statement. It is sufficient for our purposes that we should know that God did not abandon the Muslim community to their own devices on that day, when they were much inferior in number to their enemies. The Highest Society played an active part in the determination of what happened to the Muslim army and to Islam, along the lines described by God Himself in the Quran.

This slumber **(8:11)** that overcame the believers before the battle is a manifestation of a remarkable state that can only take place by God's will. The Muslims were shaken when they saw themselves facing a much superior force and taking a risk they had not reckoned with and for which they had not prepared themselves. Slumber momentarily falls upon them and they presently wake to find themselves in complete reassurance, with their hearts set at rest.

## GOD'S SUPPORT IN ALL FORMS

This slumber and reassurance were part of the reinforcement God granted to the Muslim host at Badr. **(8:11)** The wording here is very significant; *fall upon you, slumber, assurance* are all words that impart a feeling of confidence and friendliness. The Chapter paints the complete picture and highlights the great value of that moment which separated two opposite situations experienced by the Muslim host.

The water or the rain was, then, another form of support given to the Muslim fighters. When the Messenger marched towards Badr, he and his Companions stopped at a barren area with the ungrateful closer to the wells. The Muslims were apparently exhausted. Satan began to whisper into their ears trying to create doubts and suspicions. He said: How can you claim that God is your patron and His Messenger is among you, when the idolaters have beaten you to the water to the extent that you now offer your formal prayers when you are in the state of ceremonial impurity? God sent rain pouring down which enabled the Muslims to drink and cleanse themselves. God thus removed Satan's filth from them. The sandy area where they were became much firmer to enable people and animals to walk easily. They marched towards their enemies. God then supported His Messenger with one thousand angels, with the angel Gabriel leading five hundred of them on one side, and the angel Michael leading another five hundred on the other side.

When people go into a battle experiencing worry and doubt of this type, they can easily be defeated. At this moment, support is very timely: **(8:11)** Thus, the spiritual support comes together with the material one. The worry is removed as water becomes abundant, and uncertainty is replaced by assurance after they had cleansed themselves. Their march is steadier as the land becomes firmer.

In addition to this, God inspired the angels to encourage the believers and promised to strike fear in the hearts of the ungrateful. He also commanded the angels to take an active part in the battle: **(8:12)**

This is indeed the greatest aspect of this whole battle. It is the fact that God Almighty was with the angels in this battle, and the angels took part in it alongside the Muslim army. We must not lose sight of the importance of this fact by trying to find out how the angels took part. How many enemy soldiers did they kill? Or how they killed them? The great fact is that when the Muslim community takes action to establish God's faith in the land, their action is valued so highly as to deserve God's presence with the angels in battle and the angels' participation in it.

We believe that among God's creation there is a type called the

angels. We know of their nature only what God, their Creator, has told us. We cannot fathom how they participated in the Muslim victory at Badr except in as far as the fact is stated in the Quran. Their Lord inspired them saying that He was with them and commanded them to encourage the believers. They complied, because they always do what they are commanded. We, however, do not know how they fulfilled this task. God also ordered them to strike the ungrateful over their necks and strike off their fingertips. So they did all this, but in a fashion unknown to us. Knowledge of all this is merely a detail of knowing the nature of the angels, but we know of this nature only what God has chosen to tell us. Furthermore, God promised to strike terror in the hearts of the ungrateful, and this was certainly the case because God always fulfils His promises. However, we do not know how this was done. It is God who is the Creator, and He knows His creation. Indeed, God may cause a split between a person and his heart, and He is closer to any person than his own jugular vein.

To try to go into the details of all these matters is contrary to the serious nature of this faith and its practical approach. But these questions have featured prominently among the concerns of different Muslim schools and scholastic theology generally in later generations when people were no longer seriously interested in this faith. Instead, they pursued intellectual luxury. Reflection on the great significance of God's presence with the angels in the battle and the active participation of the angels in the battle itself is much more beneficial.

At the end we have a statement clarifying the reality beyond the battle and the rule that shapes events to bring about victory or defeat: **(8:13)** It is not by mere coincidence that God has granted support to the Muslim army and has stricken terror into the hearts of its enemies and commanded the angels to fight them in support of the Muslims. All this took place because they had defied God and His Messenger, adopting a line of action and an attitude that was in opposition to those of God and His Messenger, trying to prevent the code of living God had revealed from being established.

He is certainly able to punish severely those who defy Him and His Messenger. **(8:13)** They are too weak to show any resistance.

This is an established rule, not merely a coincidence. Whenever a Muslim community takes active steps to establish the principle of God's Oneness and to implement His message, it will be granted victory against any enemy that opposes it in defiance of God and His Messenger. Terror will be stricken in the hearts of those engaged in such defiance, and they will end up in defeat as long as the Muslim community holds on to its principles, relying totally on God, certain of His support.

At the end of the scene, the ungrateful who defied God and His Messenger are told directly that the terror they felt and the defeat they experienced were not all. The whole question of this faith, its implementation, and the opposition to it are not of the concerns of this world alone. It goes further, extending to the life to come. Its dimensions go far beyond our immediate world: **(8:14)** This is the real end. That torment is incomparable to what they had already experienced of terror, defeat and the striking off of their necks and their fingertips.

Thus far, the Chapter has reminded the Muslims of the conditions in which the Battle of Badr took place, showing them different scenes of the battle itself and what preceded it. It makes clear to them that at every step, it was God who dictated events and moved them in the direction He wanted, in order to accomplish His purpose.

### EXCEPT FOR TACTICAL REASONS

Now that the decisive victory has been attributed to its true factors: God's planning, support, the believers' reliance on Him alone and acceptance of whatever eventuality He determines—now with all minds visualizing the whole event, and all hearts ready for the best response, the believers are given an order to remain steady whenever they meet ungrateful in battle. They must never run away, since victory or defeat are determined by God's will and the factors contributing to either of them are different from the factors people may see. The whole battle and all its events are of God's own making and planning: **(8:15-8:16)**

These signs begin with a strong warning, a fearsome threat. Should the believers face their enemies who may in essence present themselves in a great show of power, they must not, under any circumstances, turn away, except for tactical reasons. These may include choosing a better position, carrying out a more effective plan, joining another group of believers, or moving to another Muslim stronghold in order to resume the fight. Deserters and people who turn away in flight deserve the most terrible double punishment of incurring God's wrath and being thrown into hell.

It has been said that they were not permitted to join any other group on that day because the Messenger was with them and they were not allowed to leave him, as God says in the Quran: *It had not been for the people of the city and those of the nomads around them to stay behind from the Messenger of God nor prefer themselves more than himself.* (9:120) This shows that they could not let God's Messenger down or abandon him, even though God had taken it upon Himself to protect him as He clearly states in the Quran: *God will*

*save you from the harm of humanity.* (5:67)

That was imperative on them, whether their enemies were small or large in number. Moreover, the Messenger himself was the rallying force for the Muslims on that day. Anyone turning away could only do so for tactical reasons, in an endeavor to join a company of believers. On the day of Badr, they could only join the Messenger. *And those of you who turned away on a day two multitudes met one another, only Satan caused them to slip back for some of what they had earned.* (3:155) This is due to the fact that they turned away leaving the Messenger in battle.

Similarly, on the day of Hunayn, they deserved God's punishment for leaving the Messenger and turning away: *On the day of Hunayn when you were impressed with your great numbers, but it avails you not at all.* (9:25) This was then the ruling applicable when they were with the Messenger fighting any enemy that mustered small or large forces. In another sign, God says: **(8:65)** This applied perhaps—and God knows best—to a situation when the Messenger was with them. A company of twenty had to fight two hundred, remaining steadfast. If the hostile force was greater than that, then they were allowed to try to join another group in order to resume the fight. But this was later abrogated by the Quranic statement: **(8:66)**

The sign **(8:15)** makes it compulsory for a Muslim soldier to fight when he faces two pagans. If they are more than two, then it is permissible for a single soldier to try to join a company of Muslims that may give him support. If he wants to join a group of Muslims who will not support him in the fight, he is under the threat mentioned in the Quranic sign: **(8:16)** For this reason the Messenger says: I am company to every Muslim.

To flee from battle deserves such condemnation because of the magnitude of its serious consequences on the one hand, and because it has a bearing on the very question of having faith. A believer should be firm and resolute, able to resist any force on earth, since he believes that God's power can overcome all powers. If a believer's heart experiences a tremor at a moment of danger, such a tremor should not go as far as making him flee from battle. The moment of anyone's death is determined by God alone. Therefore, no believer may flee from battle fearing for his life. This should not constitute too much of a burden for anyone. A believer is a human being who encounters an enemy, who, in turn, is a human being. Therefore, they are of the same nature. The believer, however, has the advantage of relying on the overpowering might of God Himself. Moreover, he is under God's care while he is alive, and he entrusts himself to God's care when he dies. This means that in all situations he is stronger

than his enemy who defies God and His Messenger. Therefore this absolute ruling: **(8:16)**

### GOD'S PLANNING AND HUMAN IMPLEMENTATION

The Chapter then moves on to show God's hand as He dictates events, killing the enemies of the believers, and throwing whatever is thrown. The believers, nevertheless, receive the reward, because God wants to perfect His grace on them, helping them to pass well the test He has set for them, and to reward them well for it: **(8:17)**

This follows on the heels of the first aspect of grace. **(8:18)** God's planning does not end by letting you kill your enemies with your own hands, hitting them with what His Messenger threw at them. Nor is it over with granting you strength to enable you to make a good showing in the test He set for you, and to reward you handsomely for it. He adds to all that the frustration of the designs of the ungrateful. There is no room, then, for fear or defeat. Nor is there any reason for the believers to turn their backs to the ungrateful in flight.

These statements are related to all the circumstances of the battle. Since it is God who killed the ungrateful, threw everything at them, helped the believers to put up this good show, and frustrated the designs of the ungrateful, then how come that they dispute over the spoils of war? The whole battle was conducted according to God's plan and by His will. Their role in it was merely to act as a manifestation of God's planning and His will.

### MUCH POWER, LITTLE AVAIL

When the Chapter has clearly stated that God is certain to make feeble the ungrateful' scheming it directs its address to certain people among the ungrateful. Just before the start of battle, those ungrateful sought a divine judgement, praying that the party which they described as more astray, fabricating what was unheard of and severing ties of kinship should end in miserable defeat. That was exactly Abu Jahl's prayer, seeking God's judgment. Defeat was then the outcome of the endeavors of the ungrateful. Now they are addressed directly and their prayer for a judgment is decried. They are assured that what happened at Badr was the rule not the exception. Their forces, numerous as they may be, will avail them of nothing, because it is a consistent rule that God will always be on the side of the believers: **(8:19)**

You have sought God's judgment between the Muslims and yourselves, and you have prayed to Him to destroy the party which was in error and which severed ties of kinship. God has responded,

and defeat was your lot, as you have requested. Now you know for certain which party is more erring and which severs ties of kinship.

With facts giving clear pointers, they are invited to abandon their rejection of the truth and their hostile attitude to Muslims, as well as their defiance of God and His Messenger: **(8:19)** These are words of persuasion coupled with a clear warning: The outcome is well known and cannot be changed by any gathering of forces and equipment no matter how great these are: **(8:19)** Of what use can any great force be, when God is decidedly on the side of the believers? **(8:19)** Such a battle will never be even. On one side there will be the believers who have God Himself with them. On the other, there will be the ungrateful who have only human beings fighting with them. The outcome of such a battle is a foregone conclusion.

It is true that the idolaters worshipped idols, but they never attributed to those idols any concept of godhead similar to that which they recognized as belonging to God. The Quran explains their concepts of such idols and the basis of their rituals of worship which they offered to them: *And those who take to themselves protectors other than Him say: We worship them not but that they may bring us near to God.* (39:3) This then was the basis of their idolatry: they felt that their idols could intercede with God on their behalf.

But the essence of their polytheistic beliefs were not these. Nor was it enough for any of them to simply abandon such a concept of intercession by those idols in order to be a Muslim. Otherwise, the person known as *al-hanif*, or the pure, who dissociated himself from the worship of those idols and believed in God alone, would have been considered Muslim. But they were not. The Quranic message comprises conceptual beliefs, the offering of worship to God and attributing all sovereignty to Him alone. Those who do not acknowledge Him as the overall sovereign, wherever and whenever they may happen to live, are polytheist, even though they acknowledge that there is no deity other than God and offer worship to Him. When they stop at that, they are the same as those people known as *al-hanif* whom no one describes as Muslims. People become Muslims when they complete the circle and add to their concepts and worship the acknowledgement of God's sovereignty which entails a rejection of any law, set-up, value or tradition that is not derived from God. This is the only true meaning of the Quranic message because it is the true import of the declaration that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is His Messenger. Moreover, those people who have this understanding of the declaration must join a single movement under a Quranic leadership that separates itself from the society of *jahiliyyah* and its leadership.

This must be fully understood by those people who want to be Muslims so that they are not deceived by the thought that they are Muslims in belief and practice. This is not sufficient for people to become Muslims unless they acknowledge that all sovereignty belongs to God alone. This is represented in practice by rejecting all claims that sovereignty belongs to anyone else and until they have no loyalty whatsoever to *jahiliyyah* societies and their leaderships.

Many good-natured and well-meaning people who want to be true Muslims fall prey to this trick. It is important, therefore, that they make certain of the only true form of the Quranic message. They should also know that the idolatrous Arabs were no different from them. They knew who God was and made of their idols partners who could intercede with Him on their behalf. Thus, their true disbelief centered around sovereignty and to whom it belonged.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-

18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10) ]

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

## Lesson 88(3). Critical Thinking Quranic Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

### What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

### What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

### Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

### Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

## Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal)
## Signs 8:20-8:28

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Obey God and His Messenger*
*and turn not away from him when you hear his command.* (8:20)
*And be not like those who said:*
*We heard, when they hear not.* (8:21)
*Truly, the worst of moving creatures with God*
*are unwilling to hear and unwilling to speak,*
*those who are not reasonable.* (8:22)
*If God knew any good in them*
*He would have caused them to be willing to hear.*
*And even if He had caused them to be willing to hear,*
*truly, they would have turned away,*
*and they are ones who turn aside.* (8:23)
*O those who believed! Respond to God and to the Messenger when*
*He called you to what gives you life. And know, truly, that God*
*comes between a man and his heart*

*and that to Him you will assemble.* (8:24)
*Be God-conscious of a test which will not light on those of you,*
*particularly, who did wrong.*
*And know that God is, truly, Severe in repayment.* (8:25)
*And remember when you were few, ones taken advantage of due to*
*weakness on the earth. You fear humanity would snatch you away*
*so He gave you refuge and confirmed you with His help*
*and provided you with what is good*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (8:26)
*O those who believed! Betray not God and the Messenger*
*nor betray your trusts when you know.* (8:27)
*And know that your wealth and your children*
*are a test and that God,*
*with Him is a sublime compensation.* (8:28)

## COMMENTARY°

### RESPONSE TO A CALL TO LIFE

Earlier, the Chapter mentioned the believers making it clear that God is on their side. Now they are addressed repeatedly to encourage them to obey God and His Messenger and to warn them against turning away from Him. Should they do so they will be in the same position as those who hear God's revelations being recited and who pay no heed to them. They are deaf and dumb although they may have ears to hear with and tongues to speak with. These are the vilest of all creatures on earth because they are not guided by what they hear. **(8:20-8:23)**

The believers are asked to obey God and His Messenger and not to turn away when they listen to His revelations. This address follows a number of inspiring introductions and an account of the events of the battle in which God's hand was clearly seen at work as He determined the course of events and provided help and support. All this reassured the believers that God was with them and He was certain to foil the schemes of the ungrateful. Thereafter the only proper course of action was for them to listen and obey. To turn away from God's Messenger and pay no heed to his orders after all that had happened would clearly be seen as totally unbecoming of anyone who has a mind to think and reflect.

The mention of animals occurs at its appropriate place. The Arabic term used here to refer to animals includes human beings because this is derived from the act of walking. Human beings also walk on earth. However, the term used here is most commonly used for quadruped animals. Therefore, its usage gives clear connotations so as to make those who are 'deaf, dumb and devoid of reason' appear

like animals. Indeed, they are the worst type of animals. Animals do have ears, but they only hear unintelligible words, and they have tongues but they can only make unintelligible noises. Yet by their nature, animals are guided to what is needed for their lives. Those humans, on the other hand, do not make use of their faculty of understanding. As such, they are fittingly described in the Quranic sign: **(8:22)**

This means that He would have made their minds receive well what they hear with their ears. **(8:23)** But He—limitless is He in His Glory—does not know of any goodness in them or any desire to follow proper guidance. They have perverted their natural receptive faculty. Therefore, God does not open their hearts which they have shut down or repair their nature which they have perverted. Even if God made them understand the truth of what is being presented to them, they would not open their hearts to it and they would not respond to what they understood. **(8:23)** A person may understand something with his mind, but he may still keep his heart closed, unresponsive. Even if God were to make these people understand, they would turn away and refuse to respond. A positive response is the outcome of proper listening. Many are those who may understand or choose to keep their hearts closed, unresponsive.

A further address is made to the believers calling on them to respond to God and His Messenger, providing encouragement for a positive response and warning them against turning away. They are reminded of God's blessings which they have enjoyed when they responded to God and His Messenger. **(8:24-8:25)**

God's Messenger calls on them to follow what would certainly give them life. It is a call to life in its fullness, with all its connotations. He calls on them to believe in a faith that keeps hearts and minds alive, free from the restrictions of *jahiliyyah*, ignorance and superstition, the pressures of legends, misconceptions and submission to superficial causes and inevitabilities. It is a faith that frees them from submission to anyone other than God and from being humiliated or subjugated by human beings or desires.

God's Messenger also calls on them to implement a divine law that proclaims the human being's freedom. In itself, this imparts a great honor to people because he will then believe in something that comes from God directly, and before which all human beings are equal. There is no room for the tyranny of a single person over a whole community, or a race or nation over another. All human beings are made free, enjoying equal status before the law that has been formulated and laid down by God, for the benefit of humanity. God's Messenger also calls on them to adopt a code of living and a set of

thoughts and beliefs that set them free from every bondage other than checks of nature established by God. It is He who created the human being and knows what He has created. These checks are meant to preserve the constructive potential of the human being and make the best use of it, without wasting any part of it or deviating from its constructive operation.

He also calls on them to have power and to feel exalted through their faith and constitution, having full confidence in their religion and their reward. This will enable them to fulfil their duty, to take appropriate initiative aiming at the liberation of the human race as a whole, breaking the chains of submission to creatures in order to acknowledge submission to God alone. Thus the honored position of man which tyrants have taken away will be retrieved and re-established.

God's Messenger further calls on them to strive for God's cause so that the position of God as the Supreme Lord in this world and in human life will be re- established. All claims to Godhead would thus be refuted. Usurpers of God's authority, sovereignty and power would be chased away, until they have submitted to God's sovereignty. When this takes place all submission is acknowledged to God alone. If believers die when they strive in this way, they achieve martyrdom. A new life is thus imparted to them.

This is in a nutshell what God's Messenger calls on them to do. This is indeed a call to life in the full sense of the word. This religion is a complete way of living, not a mere concept of belief. It is a practical method that allows life to flourish and prosper. Therefore, it is a call to life in all its connotations, forms and aspects. The Quran sums up all this in a few inspiring words: **(8:24)** Make this response willingly, with obedience. After all, God is able to force you to follow His guidance if He so desires.

This **(8:24)** is an awesome picture of God's power and its subtle operation. He thus forces a split between a human being and his heart and mind, making that heart His property, so that He directs it wherever He wishes. The person himself will be totally unable to influence the heart that beats within him. This is certainly an awe-inspiring image that our hearts can contemplate as we listen to it in the Quran. Human expression, however, cannot describe its effects on our hearts and how we respond to it. But the ultimate message of this statement should always keep us on the alert, so that we watch our feelings and guard against any tendency that may lead us to slip, or any fleeting thought that may push us along the way to disobedience of God. We must always be on guard so that we maintain the path that earns God's pleasure and not deviate from it during

any moment of self-indulgence or negligence.

God's Messenger who was immune to sin often used to say in his supplication: My Lord. You are the One who changes people's hearts. Make my heart constant in following Your faith. Compared to this, what should the attitude of ordinary people be when they are neither given a message, nor granted immunity to sinful temptation?

A believer is bound to feel his heart shiver as he contemplates this image, looking at his own heart placed in God's own hand, while he himself has no power to influence it in any way, although it remains inside him beating all the time.

This image is presented to the believers as they are called upon to respond to God and His Messenger when He calls on them to accept what will give them life. He is thus telling them that God can make them give the response He wants and force them to follow His guidance. But God honors them by giving them the choice and calling on them to respond willingly, so that they can earn a reward from Him, and exercise their own will which enhances their position and brings them up to the level worthy of God's trust. This is the trust of following God's guidance and exercising the role He has assigned to them on earth, as He placed them in charge of it. When people do this, they exercise their freedom of choice on the basis of clear knowledge and well-defined objectives.

You cannot escape Him, either in this world or in the Hereafter, because your hearts are in His hands and to Him you shall all be gathered. Nevertheless, He calls on you to respond to Him by your free choice to earn His reward. A forced response is not worthy of a person. **(8:24)**

### VICTORY COMING ON THE HEELS OF HARDSHIP

They are then warned against adopting a negative attitude to jihad, or making a negative response to the call to life, or refraining from the fulfilment of their duty to change what is wrong, whatever form it may take: **(8:25)** A community that allows a section of its members to be unjust will be guilty of injustice or wrongdoing. When a community does not stand up to wrongdoers, when it does not take any positive steps to punish transgressors, it deserves to share in the punishment of those wrongdoers and transgressors. It should be said that the worst type of wrongdoing is to abandon God's law which He has laid down to be implemented in human life. As a system, the Quranic message has a serious outlook based on mutual help and solidarity within the community. The Quranic message does not allow its followers to sit idle when injustice, corruption and wrongdoing continue on the rampage, let alone sees God's faith abandoned and

His Godhead denied in order to be substituted by false claims. Such people cannot hope to be spared trial and temptation simply because they are good within themselves.

Since resistance to injustice and wrongdoing requires great sacrifices of lives and property, the Quran reminds the first Muslim community of its own weakness, small numbers, the fear and persecution it endured. It also reminds those early Muslims of how God extended His shelter to them and granted them security and good provision. It must never, then, hesitate to respond to the type of life to which God's Messenger calls it, or to meet the responsibilities of this life that ensures its dignity, freedom and independence: **(8:26)**

You must remember this in order to be absolutely certain that God's Messenger calls you to that which will give you life. Remember it so that you do not ever feel reluctant to resist injustice of any type or form. Remember the days when you were weak and afraid. These were the days before God instructed you to fight the ungrateful, and before His Messenger called on you to face the mighty host in spite of your reluctance. Reflect on your situation after you have responded to this call and how you are now enjoying victory, God's reward, and the many good things He has provided for you. When you reflect on all this, you will then express your gratitude and gain further reward for that gratitude.

The Chapter paints a very powerful image of their inferior numbers and strength, as well as their worry and concern: **(8:26)** The Arabic expression emphasizes the connotations of worry, apprehension and fearful expectation that we can almost see their worried features, restless eyes and clear apprehension.

However, a transformation takes place and we have a scene of security, strength, victory and enjoyable provision, all granted by God who has extended His protection to them: **(8:26)** Coupled with this is a directive to them to demonstrate their gratitude in order to earn more reward: **(8:26)** Who can contemplate this great transformation and decline to respond to a call to a secure life that enjoys strength and affluence? This is the call of the noble Messenger who conveys God's message. Who can enjoy such a transformation without showing his gratitude to God for all His grace, when both scenes of weakness and strength, worry and security are held up in front of his eyes?

Yet those people actually lived both situations. They are reminded of their past and present. Therefore they appreciated fully what the Quran said. The Muslim community which strives today to re-establish this faith in human life may not have gone through both stages or experienced both states. The Quran, nevertheless, describes

this transformation to this and every Muslim community. If a Muslim community finds itself in the stage of weakness such as that described in the Quran: *Remember when you were few, taken advantage of because of your weakness on the earth?* Then it will do well to respond to the call to life conveyed by God's Messenger. It can await with certainty the fulfilment of God's promise. He fulfilled it to the first Muslim community and He has promised to fulfil it to every community that follows the same course of action and makes the required sacrifices. It can then look forward to a situation to which the same description applies: **(8:26)** In all this, a Muslim community is actually dealing with God and His promise that will always come true. They need be in no doubt of that.

### A REASSURING CRITERION

Another address to the believers follows. God knows that property and children may discourage people from giving the proper response to such a call as they tend to enhance traits of fear and miserliness. Therefore, the Quran highlights the fact that property and children may be the subject of a trial and warns against weaknesses that may cause people to fail in such a trial. They may feel too reluctant to respond to the call of jihad, or to shoulder the responsibilities of the trust God placed in them and the pledges of loyalty they have given. To refrain from the fulfilment of such duties is a betrayal of God and His Messenger, and a betrayal of the trust God has assigned to the Muslim community on earth. This trust requires the Muslim community to strive to make God's word triumphant, establish His Godhead as absolute, and maintain truth and justice. Coupled with this warning is a reminder of the great reward that God has in store for them which outweighs by far the value of property and children: **(8:27-8:28)**

To abandon the duties God has assigned to the Muslim community is a betrayal of God and His Messenger. The basic issue in the Quranic message is that of attributing Godhead purely and solely to God alone, following only what has been conveyed to us by His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad. Throughout human history, people did not deny God altogether, but they mostly associated partners with Him. On a few occasions, this took the form of beliefs and worship, but the form of attributing sovereignty and authority to others beside Him was much more common. Therefore, the basic issue is not to make people believe in God, but to make such a belief pure of all distortion. The declaration that "there is no god other than God" means that He is the sovereign over their life on earth, as they acknowledge His sovereignty in the universe. This is embodied in the Quranic statement: *And it is He Who is in the heaven, God, and on*

*the earth, God.* (43:84) This basic issue also entails that God's Messenger is the only source to convey what God wants of human beings, and this means that they must follow all his orders and directives. As this includes both conviction and action, the Muslim community, which has declared its belief in God, is warned against abandoning this whole issue. To do so is equal to betraying God and His Messenger.

It is, then, a fully integrated code that comprises concepts of beliefs, directives and education, as well as duties and responsibilities. It is a code that has been devised by God who knows what suits the human being, because it is He who has created the human being: *Would He Who has created not know?* (67:14)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

## LESSON 88(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL) SIGNS 8:29-8:37

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*If you are God-conscious,*
*He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong*
*and will absolve you of your evil deeds and will forgive you.*
*And God is Possessor of Sublime Grace.* (8:29)

**Makkah (8:30-8:36)**

**Madinah:** *And mention when those who were ungrateful*
*plan against you to bring you to a standstill*
*or to kill you or to drive you out.*
*God will differentiate the bad from what is good.*
*And He will lay the bad, some on some other,*
*and heap them up altogether and lay them into hell.*
*Those, they are the ones who are losers.* (8:37)

### COMMENTARY°

The last address to the believers here requires them to remain God-consciousness. People cannot fulfil such heavy responsibilities unless they are fully aware of their true position, equipped with light that clears all misunderstandings and a determination that steadies their footsteps along the road they have to traverse. They can only

have that when they have the sensitivity imparted by fearing God and benefit by the light He provides: **(8:29)**

This is, then, the equipment needed along the road. It is the sense of being conscious of God which makes people's hearts alive and keeps them fully alert. With God's light they can see clearly; their vision is not clouded by anything. Besides, being conscious of God is the proper equipment which ensures forgiveness for errors and sinful deeds. It provides reassurance and security, as well as great hope for a great bounty from God on the Day of Judgment when people discover that their actions have fallen short of expectation.

It is a fact of life that being conscious of God provides people with a standard to distinguish truth from falsehood. Like all facts of faith, however, this can only be appreciated by those who have experienced it. Description cannot begin to give a feeling of this fact to those who have no experience of it. Matters remain intermingled in people's minds and thoughts, and falsehood tries to always cling to the truth, particularly at points of divergence. Argument may silence objections, but cannot provide conviction, and polemics remain futile unless people are equipped with a sense of God-consciousness. When God-consciousness is present, minds are open to see the truth, and the way ahead is defined. Thus, people can enjoy security and reassurance, and walk along with steady steps.

The truth itself may not be lost to human nature because God has made this nature responsive to the truth. But people's desires may force a separation between the truth and human nature. It is such desires that becloud people's vision and cause them to lose their way. People's desires are not overcome by argument, but by a sense of consciousness of God. Therefore, the standard to discern truth from falsehood is all important to enlighten the way to those who wish to follow it. It is a priceless gift from God. God's grace, however, does not stop at that. God adds to it the forgiveness of sins as well as a great bounty. This can only be provided by the Lord whose grace is great, limitless, unceasing.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

**DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS**

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

**ASK YOURSELF:**

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about it?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

## LESSON 88(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies, critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL) SIGNS 8:38-8:44

**Madinah :** *Say to those who were ungrateful:*
*If they refrain themselves, what is past will be forgiven.*
*And if they repeat then, surely,*
*a custom passed of the ancient ones as a warning.* (8:38)
*And fight them until there be no persecution and the way of life*
*—all of it—be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves,*
*then, truly, God is Seeing of what they do.* (8:39)
*And if they turned away, then, know that God is your Defender.*
*How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper!* (8:40)
*And know that whatever thing you gain as booty,*
*then, truly one-fifth of it belongs to God and to the Messenger*
*and to the possessors of kinship and the orphans*
*and the needy and the traveler of the way,*
*if you had been believing in God*
*and in what We caused to descend*
*to Our servant on the Day of the Criterion*
*between right and wrong,*
*the day when the two multitudes met one another.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (8:41)
*Mention when you were on the nearer bank of the valley*
*and they were on the farther bank of the valley*
*and the cavalcade was below you.*
*Even if you made a promise together,*
*you would be, certainly, at variance as to the solemn declaration*
*because God decrees a command that had been*
*one that is accomplished so that he who perishes*
*would have perished by a clear portent*
*and he who lives would live on by a clear portent.*
*And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:42)
*Mention when God causes **you** to see them*
*as few in **your** slumbering.*

*If He caused you to see them as many, you would have lost heart*
*and contended with one another about the command*
*except God saved you.*
*Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (8:43)
*And mention when He causes you to see them*
*when you met one another as few in your eyes*
*and He makes you few in their eyes*
*so that God decrees a command*
*that had been one that is accomplished.*
*And commands are returned to God.* (8:44)

## COMMENTARY°

When the Quraysh suffered their major setback at the Battle of Badr, and their defeated army arrived back in Makkah, Abu Sufyan and his trade caravan had already returned there. Abd Allah ibn Rabiah, Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl, Safwan ibn Umayyah and a number of other people from the Quraysh who suffered the loss of their fathers, brothers or sons at Badr went to Abu Sufyan and his fellow merchants who had major shares in that trade caravan. They said to them: Elders of the Quraysh, Muhammad has levelled a heavy blow on you and killed a number of the best people among you. Help us to fight him by donating this money to the war effort. This may enable us to secure revenge against him. All of them agreed. It is in comment on their action that God revealed this Quranic sign: **(8:38)**

What happened before and after Badr was only an example of this continuous effort by the enemies of this faith. They spend their money, concentrate their efforts and use all their ability to turn people away from the path of God. They set up obstacles to impede the progress of this religion and to suppress the Muslim community everywhere and at all times.

God warns those ungrateful who spend their money to turn people away from His path that they will come to regret their actions. They allocate their resources for a futile purpose. They will eventually be defeated and the truth will be triumphant. They will suffer the fate of hell, where they will taste the greatest regret. All this has the purpose outlined in the following statement: **(8:38)** But how will this come about?

The money and other resources that are so allocated enable evil to sustain its aggression. The truth counters such aggression with a determined struggle, i.e. jihad, and moves to smash the ability of evil and falsehood to sustain their aggression. In this hard fought battle, natures crystallize and the truth is separated from the evil, as are the advocates and supporters of each side. Indeed, such separation takes

place even within the ranks that initially join the side of the truth, and this before it begins to endure trials and hardship. Those who are firm believers, determined fighters and unwavering in their support of the truth are distinguished. These deserve to be granted victory by God, because they are well able to undertake the trust of its message. They will not abandon it under any circumstances, no matter what pressures and trials they are made to endure.

At this stage, God groups all the evil ones together and casts them into hell, where they suffer the greatest loss. The Quranic expression shows evil as a sizeable mass, as if it is nothing more than a huge heap of dirt which is cast in hell with little regard: (8:38) This image gives the expression a stronger impact on our minds, as is always the case with Quranic imagery.

With this clear outline of the destiny of heaped evil and allied falsehood, the Chapter directs the Messenger to issue a final warning to the ungrateful. The Muslim front is also commanded to fight until there is no more oppression on earth and human beings are all free to submit to God alone. The Muslim fighters are reassured that they receive support from God, their protector. Therefore, they will not be overcome by any force or devious ploy.

Say to the ungrateful that if they desist, all that is past shall be forgiven them; but if they persist [in their erring ways], let them remember what happened to the like of them in former times. Fight them until there is no more oppression, and all submission is made to God alone. If they desist, God is certainly aware of all they do. But if they turn away, know that God is your Lord Supreme. How splendid is this Lord Supreme, and how splendid is this giver of support.

The Messenger is ordered **(8:38-8:40)** to make it clear to the ungrateful that they have an open chance to mend their ways, to stop forming alliances against the Quranic message and its advocates, and allocating resources to turn people away from God's path. The way is open to them to turn to God in repentance. If they do, God promises to forgive them all their past actions. The adoption of the Quranic message waives all that a person has done in his past. He is just as innocent as a new-born child. But if they revert to their erring ways and continue with their aggression and rejection of the faith, then the laws God has set in operation in the universe will have their effect. These laws brought God's punishment on the ungrateful of the past after they were warned and given clear proof of the truth. It is also God's law to grant victory to the believers and to establish them in a position of power. This law will never fail. The ungrateful may make

their choice now that they are at the crossroads. Thus the address to the ungrateful is concluded.

### A POSITIVE APPROACH TO REALITY

The Chapter now addresses the believers: **(8:39-8:40)** This is the purpose and the limit of jihad, or struggle for God's cause, not only at a particular period in time, but at all times. The Quranic message is a positive movement which deals with human situations employing means that are suitable for different situations. Moreover, it is a well structured movement that uses fitting means and methods for every stage. Nevertheless, we have here a statement that lays down a permanent principle that defines the objectives of the confrontation between the Quranic message and un-Quranic social setups. This is embodied in the sign which says: **(8:39)**

The Quranic message is a general declaration of the liberation of the human being on earth from subjugation to other creatures, including his own desires, through the acknowledgement of God's Lordship over the universe and all creation. We also pointed out that this declaration signifies a total revolution against assigning sovereignty to human beings, whatever forms, systems and situations such sovereignty may take.

There are two essential prerequisites for the achievement of this great goal. The first is to put an end to all oppression and persecution which targets the followers of this religion who declare their own liberation from human sovereignty and submit themselves to God alone. This cannot take place unless a community of believers establish their own movement and their own leadership that tries to put this general declaration into practice. This movement will be ready to continue its struggle against every tyrant who persecutes the followers of this religion or uses force, pressure and oppression to turn people away from it.

The second prerequisite is the destruction of every force that is established on the basis of submission to human beings, in any shape or form. This will guarantee the achievement of the first goal and put into effect the declaration that all Godhead and Lordship on earth belong to God alone. Thus, there will be no submission to anyone other than God and no authority except His. We are talking here about submission to God's authority, not merely believing in Him.

We need to add here a point of clarification, because some people may feel uneasy about what we say, particularly in the light of the Quranic sign: *There is no compulsion in the way of life. Surely right judgment has become clear from error.* (2:256)

The statement, 'all submission is made to God alone,' means the

removal of physical impediments to people's submission to God. These impediments take the form of tyrannical authorities that impose their will on individuals. When these physical impediments are removed, all authority on earth will belong to God and human beings will not be subjugated by any tyrannical authority. Human beings will then be able to make their individual choices of what faith to adopt, in total freedom, without any pressure. Any faith other than the Quranic message that people may choose to follow must not establish a grouping that acquires physical force to exercise pressure on others and prevent them from following divine guidance. It must never resort to oppression against those who dissociate themselves from any power other than that of God. As individuals, human beings are free to choose the faith they want. But they are not free to establish a tyrannical authority to subjugate other human beings. Every human being must be free to submit himself, or herself, to the Lord of humanity, the Lord of the universe.

Human beings will not achieve the position of honor God has guaranteed them, nor will humanity all over the earth be liberated unless submission is made to God alone, to the exclusion of anyone and anything else. It is for this noble objective that the Muslim community fights: **(8:39)** Whoever accepts this principle and abides by it will be at peace with the Muslims who will accept such a position, making no attempt to search into motives and intentions. They will leave all that to God. **(8:39)** But whoever persists in opposing God's authority will be fought by the Muslims who rely on God's help: **(8:40)**

Such is the positive, practical and serious Quranic attitude as it moves to establish itself in practical life and ensure that Lordship is acknowledged to God alone by all humanity. This religion is not a theory that people learn from a book to enjoy its intellectual subtleties and to boast about their knowledge. Nor is it a negative faith that is confined to a relationship between human beings and their Lord. On the other hand, it is not merely a set of worship practices which people offer to their Lord. This religion is a general declaration for the liberation of humanity. It takes a realistic and practical approach that employs suitable means to confront any human situation. When it is impeded by obstacles of understanding, it speaks out, making its message absolutely clear. But when it faces the impediments of social systems and tyrannical authorities, it confronts them with a physical struggle, launching a campaign of jihad to destroy all tyranny and establish God's authority in its place.

This Quranic message moves within a human practical situation. Its struggle against ignorance is not one between theories. As

*jahiliyyah* is represented in a social order and an authority, then this religion must have its own social order and authority in order to confront *jahiliyyah* with equal and suitable means. Moreover, it must begin its struggle to ensure that religion belongs entirely to God, which means that no submission may be offered to anyone else.

Such is the positive and practical approach of this religion of Islam. It is nothing like the defeatists say, even though they may be sincere and well intentioned. They may even wish to be Muslims but the true image of the Quranic message may be obscure in their minds.

For our part, we praise God for having guided us to this understanding. We would not have been able to have such clarity of understanding without God's guidance.

The transition from the end of the previous passage to the beginning of the present one is very smooth. The beginning here continues to outline rulings concerning fighting, which were begun with: **(8:38-8:40)** The opening sign in this passage continues these rulings, outlining those that apply to spoils that are gained as a result of victory in battle.

### WHEN THE FIGHTING IS OVER

Much controversy is found in reports and among scholars on several points relating to the meaning of this sign: **(8:41)** The main points of debate are as follows: Are the "spoils of war" mentioned in the opening sign of the Chapter the same as the "booty" mentioned here or are they two different things? The Quranic text uses two different terms to refer to them.

Since four-fifths are given to the fighters and divided among them, how is the remaining portion of one-fifth to be divided? Is the one-fifth portion that belongs to God to be divided in turn into five equal shares? If so, one of these belongs to God, but is this share the same as that which belongs to God's Messenger? Or is the Messenger's share a separate one?

Does the Messenger's share (i.e. one-fifth of one-fifth of the whole booty) belong to him personally? Or is it transferred to every Muslim ruler after him?

Is the share assigned to "the near of kin" exclusive to the Messenger's relatives of the clans of Hashim and Abd al-Muttalib, as was the case during the Messenger's time? Or does a Muslim ruler have any discretion over its distribution?

Are these fixed and equal shares into which the original portion of one-fifth of the booty must be divided? Or do the Messenger and the Muslim rulers who succeed him have discretionary authority over its usage and spending?

There are further points of debate over other matters of detail. Following our usual approach in this commentary, we prefer not to discuss such controversial points, leaving them to be pursued in specialized studies. Moreover, the whole question of spoils of war is far removed from the practical realities of the Muslim world today. This is not something that is facing us at the present time. We do not have a Muslim state led by a leadership that follows the Quranic message, fighting a campaign of jihad which may give it spoils of war that need to be divided according to Quranic regulations.

Recognizing this serious approach of the Quranic message, we do not wish to engage in any discussion of the juristic details concerning the question of booty and spoils of war until the time is right for such discussion. That is when God wills to bring into being a society which launches a campaign of jihad that leads to the acquisition of spoils of war. When that occurs, regulations will be needed to divide such spoils. In this commentary it is sufficient for our purposes to concentrate on the basic issue of faith in the historical progress of the Muslim community and the method of education to which it is exposed. This is a constant factor we find in God's book which is not subject to change at any time. Everything else is of secondary value.

The general rule outlined in the Quranic sign states: **(8:41)** This rule assigns four-fifths of anything gained in battle to the fighters themselves. The remaining one-fifth is left to God's Messenger and Muslim leaders implementing God's law and striving to further God's cause. They are required to dispense with it only those mentioned so as to satisfy real needs when such booty has been gained.

### IF YOU TRULY BELIEVE

Following this, we have a permanent directive in the following statement: **(8:41)** True faith has certain essential indicators to prove it. God makes His recognition of true faith for the fighters in Badr conditional on their acceptance of His ruling on the question of the spoils of war. If they accept then they are truly believers in God and what He revealed to His Messenger. In fact such acceptance is a practical demonstration of faith.

The real meaning of faith is thus stated clearly in the Quran, without equivocation. It does not admit anything of the wide variety of interpretations and controversial details introduced by the different schools and sects. Such schools opened the way for argument, academic controversy and logical debate, which led, in turn, to accusations and counter accusations. It then became possible to brand someone as an unbeliever and for the refutation of such an allegation

to no longer rely on the clear and basic essentials of faith. Instead, they relied on prejudice and the need to score a point against opponents. Thus people began to accuse others of unbelief because of disagreement on points of detail, while others sought to refute such accusations by following very strict lines of thought and action. Both attitudes were products of historical circumstances. The divine faith is clear, well defined, free from ambiguity and extremism. The Messenger says: To be a true believer does not come about through wishful thinking. True faith is that which is firmly rooted in one's heart and to which credence is given by practice. To be a true believer presupposes acceptance of God's law and its implementation in real life. Conversely, the rejection of God's law and the implementation of a law other than the one He has laid down, in matters large or small, constitutes unbelief.

God's law provides rulings that are clear and decisive. One example of these is provided in this sign: **(8:41)** The same applies to all categorical statements that delineate the nature of true faith and its framework which we read in the divine book.

God has taken away the ownership of the spoils of war from those who actually collected them on the battlefield, and assigned that ownership to God and His Messenger, as stated clearly at the opening of the Chapter. His purpose was that those who fight for God's cause may have only pure motives. Thus, they would be able to remove from their minds all thoughts and temptations that relate to the life of this world. They would be able then to submit themselves totally to God, fighting the battle for God's cause, under His banner, in obedience to Him and to earn His pleasure. They accept His rule over their lives as they accept it over all their affairs, making no dissent or objection. This is the practical meaning of true faith, as clearly explained in the first sign of the Chapter which vested all authority over the spoils of war in God and the Messenger: **(8:1)**

When they accepted God's ruling, demonstrating that faith is deeply rooted in their hearts, God gave them back four-fifths of the spoils of war, and retained one-fifth in its original ownership, i.e. belonging to God and His Messenger. The Messenger was then to dispense with it for the welfare of those in the Muslim community who needed help, be they near of kin, orphans, needy or wayfarers. When the share of four-fifths was given back to them, the Muslims were well aware that they did not own it by right of fighting or victory. They went to war for God's sake, and achieved victory for His faith. They only deserved this share of four-fifths because God granted it to them, just as He determined the outcome of the battle and indeed all their affairs, and just as He granted them victory. They are re-

minded here anew that obeying this new order is a manifestation of faith. It is indeed both the condition and the outcome of being true believers: **(8:41)** We see clearly how Quranic statements support one another in confirming an essential and decisive principle of the Quranic message that relates to the true meaning of having faith.

Let us now reflect for a moment on God's description of His Messenger as *Our servant*, at this particular point where the ownership of the spoils of war is stated as clearly belonging to God and the Messenger: **(8:41)** It is indeed an inspiring description. Being a truly obedient servant of God is the essence of faith, and, at the same time, the highest position any human being can achieve when being honored by God. Therefore it is expressly mentioned at the point when God's Messenger is required to convey God's orders and assign the task of dispensing what God placed at his disposal.

This is indeed the case in real life: being a servant of God is not merely a position of honor; it is the highest position to which a human being can aspire. True submission to God alone protects people from being enslaved by their own desires or by other human beings. No human being can attain this highest position unless he refuses to submit to his own desires or to anyone other than God.

Those who are too proud to submit themselves to God alone are automatically enslaved by their own desires and caprice, which is the worst type of slavery. They lose their sense of free will with which God has favored human beings. They sink to the level of animals and soon descend to the worst rank of animals. They take themselves down to a level that God describes as *the lowest of the low*, (95:5) after they have been created *in the fairest form*. (95:4) They are willing to accept enslavement by others like them when they allow such people to conduct their lives according to narrow-minded theories and philosophies that are ignorant, deficient and arrogant.

Such people are also ready to submit to certainties which they are told to be inevitable and to admit no discussion, such as the certainties of history, economic development and evolution! There is indeed a long list of such materialist certainties and inevitabilities which enslave man and keep his head in the sand.

### A Criterion of Distinction

We need now to discuss the description of the Battle of Badr as the *day He will assign you a Criterion between right and wrong* **(8:29)** as it occurs in the first sign of the present passage.

The Battle of Badr, which started and finished according to God's own planning, direction and help, was indeed a criterion of distinction between truth and falsehood, as most commentators say.

However, we are speaking here of a distinction that is much wider and far more profound. The truth, as meant here, is that original truth on the basis of which the whole structure of the heavens and the earth is established, as also the nature of all living things. It is the truth represented in the concept of God's Oneness, and His being the only deity who has the overall sovereignty, and authority over the universe. It is He who plans all that takes place. Everything in the universe: the heavens, the earth, animate and inanimate objects submit to His authority that admits no partnership with anyone. His will is enforceable without question. Falsehood, on the other hand, is incidental, although at the time of Badr it spread over the whole earth, beclouding people's vision so that they could not distinguish the original truth. It also created tyrannical deities that ruled over people's lives and conducted their affairs. That was the nature of the distinction that took place at Badr, when the original truth was distinguished from the tyrannical falsehood so that they could no longer be confused.

The far-reaching and profound significance of the distinction between the truth and falsehood that took place at Badr was multidimensional. It separated the truth from falsehood within people's hearts and consciences. This provided, in effect, a complete distinction between absolute monotheism that assigns authority over human feelings, behavior, morals, worship and submission to God alone, and polytheism in all its shapes and forms. This certainly includes mental submission to anyone other than God, be that a human being, a desire, a social value or a tradition.

Badr also separated truth from falsehood in daily life situations. It provided a clear separation between people's practical enslavement by other people, desires, values, laws and traditions on the one hand, and accepting, in all these matters, God's judgment, recognizing that He has no associate or partner, and that He is the only Lord and legislator. Thus human beings were able to raise their heads high, rejecting all tyranny and bending to no authority other than that of God, the only law-giver.

The Battle of Badr also separated two different stages in the history of the Quranic movement: the stage of grouping, perseverance and steadfastness, and the stage of strength, pre-emption and taking the initiative. The Quranic message represents a new concept of life, a code of living, a social order and a system of state and government. All these are results of the liberation of humanity all over the world which the Quranic message achieves through the establishment of God's sovereignty in human life and by rejecting all tyranny. As such, the Quranic message must always acquire strength and take the ini-

tiative. It is not in the nature of the Quranic message to remain in waiting for events and developments. It cannot remain a collection of beliefs that are represented in worship rituals and moral behavior. It must take action to establish its new concept, practice its code of living and lay the foundation of its new social order and state. This requires the removal of all physical and material impediments that hinder the practical implementation of its constitution in the life of the Muslim community at first, and later in human life as a whole. Needless to say, God has given us all these for practical implementation.

Badr also separated two epochs in human history. Prior to the establishment of the Quranic message, humanity as a whole was a totally different entity. The new Quranic concept of life and the new Muslim community meant a rebirth of humanity, while the new set of values provided the foundation of a new social order and a new code of law. After Badr, these were no longer the sole property of the Muslims alone. They gradually became the property of all humanity, which came to be profoundly influenced by them, within the land of the Quranic message and outside it. This applied to those who adopted a friendly attitude to Islam, and also to those who were hostile. The Crusaders who marched from the West to exterminate Islam in its own territory were strongly influenced by the traditions of the Muslim society they came to destroy. When they went home, they put an end to the feudal system that prevailed in Europe, after they had seen the lingering traditions of the Quranic system.

Badr also provided a clear distinction between two outlooks defining the causes of defeat and victory. The battle took place at a time when all apparent factors clearly indicated a victory for the ungrateful and predicted a defeat for the Muslims. The hypocrites and those sick at heart declared: *Their way of life deluded these people.* **(8:49)** Since it was the first major battle between the unbelieving majority and the Muslim minority, God willed that it should take place in this particular fashion in order to provide a clear distinction between causes of victory and defeat. Strong faith was thus able to overcome numerical strength and superior equipment so that people should know that victory belongs to the faith that has the elements of strength and is designed to bring out the best in human beings. Those who believe in the true faith must strive hard and join the battle against falsehood, without waiting until they have the same material strength as their enemy. They should be aware that they have another type of strength that can tip the balance in their favor. These are not idle words. This is an evident reality.

The Battle of Badr was also a distinction between the truth and

falsehood in a different sense, which we derive from God's statement in the early part of the Chapter: **(8:7-8:8)**

Those Muslims who marched with the Messenger from Madinah wanted only to capture the trade caravan led by Abu Sufyan. God, however, wanted something else for them. He wanted them to miss out on capturing the trade caravan and to meet in battle the army led by Abu Jahl. He wanted them to go through a hard battle when fighters are killed and prisoners are taken. He did not want them to have an easy mission which ended in the capture of handsome booty. Furthermore, He told them that He willed this in order to: **(8:8)**

This is a clear reference to a fundamental issue. In human society, the truth cannot be established and falsehood cannot be clearly seen as false on the basis of any theoretical exposition of each, or even by an academic belief that the one is true and the other is false. The establishment of truth and the eradication of falsehood in the real world can only come about when the might of falsehood is smashed and the authority of truth is triumphant. This takes place when victory is achieved by the army of truth over the forces of falsehood. This religion is not a mere theory for debate. It is a practical code of living.

God's purpose was certainly achieved with the truth firmly established as true and falsehood clearly seen as false. He has indeed stated His purpose behind bringing His Messenger out of his hometown with the truth, allowing the caravan (the host of little might) to escape its chasers and bringing about the encounter with the mighty host, so that the battle could take place.

All this is a criterion of distinction characteristic of the method of operation of the Quranic message. We are thus able to clearly see the nature of this method of operation and how it is perceived by Muslims. Today we feel the need and the importance of this criterion as we witness ambiguity creeping into people's perception of basic Quranic concepts. Indeed some of those who call others to embrace this religion are not free from such ambiguity.

The Battle of Badr was indeed a way to separate the true from the false in the sense of this whole range of concepts.

The Battle of Badr was an indisputable example of the working of God's power. It was an event that cannot be explained in any way other than its being brought about by God's power which can easily accomplish whatever He wants.

### IN CLEAR EVIDENCE OF THE TRUTH

At this point the Chapter refers once more to the Battle of Badr, portraying its scenes and events in a splendid style, to bring it all

alive before our eyes. It also points out the fact that it was God who conducted the battle, so that we almost see God's hand shaping events as they take place. Moreover, the Chapter tells us the purpose behind God's determination of the course of events. **(8:42-8:44)**

The battle is about to start, with each of the two combatants taking position, and with a clear pointer to the subtle and elaborate planning behind it all. We can visualize how God's hand brings each party to its position, while the caravan manages to slip away. The very words unveil God's planning as the Messenger sees his dream, and as each party sees the other as small in number, which tempts each party with the prospect of victory. Only the Quranic style can portray scenes so vividly, and bring them alive in such a concise method of expression.

Reference has already been made to the scenes portrayed in this part of the Chapter. When the Muslims left Madinah, they finally encamped at the end of the valley that was closer to Madinah, while the army of ungrateful took its position at the other end. There was a small hill separating the two sides. As for the caravan, Abu Sufyan managed to slip away with it to the coastal area, below the positions of both hosts.

Neither of the two armies was aware of the position of the other. It was God who brought them both to their positions by the hill, in order to accomplish a certain purpose of His own. Indeed, had they made prior arrangements to meet, they would not have taken their positions so close to each other and they would not have arrived there at the same time, as they actually did. God reminds the Muslim community of all this so that they always remember how God can accomplish any purpose He may have at any point in time. *Mention when you were on the nearer bank of the valley and they were on the farther bank of the valley and the cavalcade was below you. Even if you had made a promise together, you would have certainly been at variance as to the solemn declaration because God has decreed a command that had been accomplished so that he who perishes might perish by a clear portent and he who lives would live on by a clear portent. And truly God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(8:42)** Behind such an unplanned meeting there was certainly a purpose which God made the Muslim community the means to achieve. Moreover, He arranged all the circumstances that helped its accomplishment.

What is this matter for the accomplishment of which God arranged all the necessary circumstances? It is the one which He describes in these terms: **(8:42)** The verb perish may be used to express its direct meaning, or may be used to denote ingratitude and rejection of the faith. The same applies to 'live' which could express life and

may refer to faith itself. The latter meaning is nearer and clearer in this particular instance.

In the same sense God says in the Quran: *Is he who has been lifeless and We gave him life and We made a light for him by which he walks among humanity like he who is in the shadows and is not one who goes forth from them? Thus it was made to appear pleasing to ones who are ungrateful what they had been doing.* (6:122) Here denial of the true faith is described as death, while embracing the divine faith is portrayed as having life. This is indeed how the Quranic message views the nature of faith and denying it. The basis for giving more weight to this meaning in this particular instance is the fact that the Battle of Badr was, as God describes it, a day which separated truth from falsehood. Therefore, anyone who denies the faith after Badr does so in clear evidence of the truth. Likewise, anyone who believes does so on the basis of the clear evidence pointing to the truth provided by the battle itself.

With all the circumstances surrounding the Battle of Badr, the battle itself provided an irrefutable evidence of elaborate planning that dwarfs, by comparison, any plans human beings may devise, and points to a power that is totally different from that of human beings. It proved that this faith is supported by the Lord who takes care of its advocates when they demonstrate their sincerity and remain steadfast in their struggle for its cause. Had material strength been the decisive factor the ungrateful would not have been vanquished on the day of Badr, and the believers would not have scored such a great and decisive victory.

The ungrateful themselves said to their own ally who offered to support them with a battalion of his tribesmen: If we are fighting men like us, we are more than a match to them. But if we are fighting God, as Muhammad claims, then no human force can stand in opposition to God. Had mere knowledge been sufficient, they were certainly aware that they were taking a stand in opposition to God Himself, as they were told by Muhammad, the man who personified honesty and spoke nothing but the truth. They were certain that no one was a match for God Almighty. If after all this they perished on account of their denial of the faith, they perished after having had very clear evidence of the truth.

### A PURPOSE TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Such are the thoughts that come immediately to mind when we try to understand God's statement: **(8:42)** However, the statement also imparts a different sense.

That the truth achieved victory in the battle between its advo-

cates and the supporters of falsehood, after it had also triumphed in people's hearts, helps to put matters clearly in front of our eyes. No ambiguity or confusion is left after the victory at Badr has clarified all issues. Anyone who chooses to perish, i.e. rejects the true faith, no longer has any doubt concerning the truth after it had made its presence so clearly felt. Similarly, anyone who chooses life, i.e. embraces the faith, has no doubt that he is making his choice in favor of the truth which will always enjoy God's support against the tyrants who try to suppress it.

This takes us back to what we mentioned in our introduction when we spoke of the need to launch a jihad campaign to destroy the forces of evil and tyranny, and to enable the truth to triumph. Such jihad helps to make the truth clear to all: **(8:42)** Again, this understanding of the statement makes it easier for us to understand the significance of a later statement in this Chapter, in which the following directive is given: **(8:60)** Putting forces on the alert to frighten the enemy may help to make the truth clear in certain hearts and minds which only understand the language of force.

The comment that follows on this aspect of God's planning and execution of the battle and the purpose behind it all takes the following form: **(8:42)** Nothing that is said by the parties supporting truth or falsehood, and nothing that they may harbor in their hearts behind their words or actions escapes God as He puts His plan into action in full knowledge of all that is hidden or apparent. He does indeed hear all and know all.

This statement and the comment that follows occur in the middle of the account given in the Chapter of the events of the battle and its course. The next sign continues with this account: **(8:43)** Part of God's planning for the battle was that His Messenger should see the ungrateful in his dream as small in number, having no real strength. He told his companions of this and it gave them encouragement. Here God's Messenger is told the reason for this vision. Had God shown him a large force, it would have demoralized his Companions, who were no more than a small group of believers who joined him on an expedition, neither expecting a battle nor prepared for one. This would have weakened them and caused them to be in dispute over whether to fight or to avoid a confrontation. Such a dispute is the worst thing to happen to an army on the verge of meeting an enemy force: **(8:43)**

It was an aspect of God's grace that He, knowing the weakness of the Muslim group in that particular situation, showed the ungrateful to His Messenger as small in number, whereas they were truly a much larger force. That dream had true significance. Their numerical

strength was of little consequence, as their minds were devoid of broad vision, and their hearts deprived of faith. It was this true picture that God showed to His Messenger to reassure the small Muslim force. God was fully aware of their feelings and their inmost thoughts, as they were aware of their numerical weakness and lack of equipment. He was also aware of what would be the effect on them of their knowledge of their enemy's numerical superiority. Needless to say, they would have been reluctant to confront the enemy. It was, then, part of God's planning that they should think their enemy to have a smaller fighting force than it actually had.

When the two hosts actually met face to face, that which the Messenger saw in his true dream was repeated, but it was this time by actual eyesight and by both sides. This was again part of God's elaborate planning of which the believers are reminded in this review of the battle and its events: **(8:44)** This particular aspect of God's scheme encouraged both parties to go to war. The believers saw their enemies as a small force because they were looking at them from the viewpoint of real strength, while the ungrateful considered the believers to be of little consequence, because they judged them only by appearances. With the two facts shaping the way each party looked at the other, the purpose of God's planning was accomplished and His will was done. **(8:44)** This is the appropriate comment on the accomplishment of what God willed. This is a matter that rests with God alone. He brings it into being by His will and shapes it with His power. It is never removed from His will or His divine wisdom. Indeed nothing takes place in the whole universe except what He has willed.

Since all things are conducted by God and victory is granted by Him, while neither numerical strength nor superior firepower can resolve a confrontation or determine the outcome of a battle, the believers should remain steadfast and persevere when they meet ungrateful in battle. What they should do, however, is to have the proper equipment for the battle and take the measures that keep on the right footing their relationship with God who has the final say over all matters. It is He who grants effective support and commands all power and authority. They must also avoid the causes of defeat which led the ungrateful to be vanquished despite their great numbers and superior equipment. They must rid themselves of conceit, arrogance and falsehood. They should guard against falling prey to Satan's deception, for it was he who led the ungrateful to their destruction. They must place their trust in God alone.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

### HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

## LESSON 88(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

We are not judged arbitrarily: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

This moral order works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

God has entered into covenant with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Reason: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

Good deeds: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

## Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal) Signs 8:45-8:48

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*When you met a faction,*
*then, stand firm and remember God frequently*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.* (8:45)
*And obey God and His Messenger*
*and contend not with one another.*
*Then, you lose heart and your competence go.*
*And have patience.*
*Truly, God is with the ones who remain steadfast.* (8:46)
*And be not like those who went forth from their abodes recklessly*
*to show off to personages and bar them from the way of God.*
*And God is One Who Encloses what they do.* (8:47 )
*And mention when Satan made to appear pleasing*
*their actions to them and said:*
*No one will be ones who are victors against you this day*
*from among all personages. And, truly, I will be your neighbor.*
*But when the two factions sighted one another,*
*he receded on his two heels and said:*
*Truly, I am free of you.*
*Truly, I see what you see not.*
*Truly, I fear God. And God is Severe in repayment.* (8:48 )

### Commentary°

#### Eliminating Causes of Failure

In these signs **(8:45-8:48)** we have a host of inspiring touches, rules, directives, scenes and attitudes; all relating to the battle. Ideas, feelings and inner thoughts are portrayed which normally need much greater space to describe, but they are all most vividly delineated here in the unique style of the Quran. They start with an address to the believers, which is one of many in the Chapter, instructing them to stand firm when they meet their enemy. They should also try to acquire all that is needed to ensure victory. This includes a steadfast attitude, frequent remembrance of God to maintain their relationship with Him, obedience to God and His Messenger, avoidance of internal conflict and dispute, patience in adversity, perseverance in battle, and steering away from conceit, showing off and persecution of others.

Steadfastness is the first step to victory, and the party that is more steadfast is the one which has the upper hand. Although the believers cannot tell, their enemy may be suffering even more than what they themselves are suffering. Their enemy may even be enduring

more pain, although that enemy could not hope to receive support from God as they hope to do. It may be that if the believers only remain steadfast for a moment longer, their enemy will collapse and be vanquished. Why should the believers ever feel shaken when they are certain that they will have either one of the best two alternatives: victory or martyrdom? Their enemy, on the other hand, aims at nothing further than the life of this world. This explains why ungrateful are so keen to achieve material superiority in this life which is the ultimate they hope for, since they have no hope in the life to come.

Frequent remembrance of God at the time when an encounter with the enemy is imminent is a constant directive to believers. It is a consistent teaching that becomes well engraved in the hearts of believers. Indeed the Quran shows it as a feature of the community of believers in their long history.

The Quran tells us about the sorcerers Pharaoh gathered for a contest with Moses. When they submitted to the faith after they had realized that it represented the truth, Pharaoh issued them with a highly frightening warning outlining the punishment which he would inflict on them, unless they abandoned their new faith. Their response was: *You take revenge on us only because we have believed in the sings of our Lord when they drew near to us. Our Lord! Pour out patience on us and call us to Yourself as ones who submit.* (7:126) The Quran also mentions the case of a small band of believers among the Children of Jacob who were facing the might of Goliath and his army: *When they departed against Goliath and his army they said: Our Lord! Pour out patience on us and make our feet firm and help us against the folk—ones who are ungrateful.* (2:250)

In the Quranic accounts of the attitudes of believing communities as they were fighting their battles we read the following statement: *And many a Messenger has there been whom, along with him, many thousands have fought, but none lost confidence with what lighted on them in the Way of God nor were they weakened nor were they to give in. And God loves the ones who remain steadfast. And their saying has been only that they said: Our Lord! Forgive us our impieties and our excessiveness in our affair and make our feet firm and help us against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:146-3:147)

This type of education was well taken by the early Muslim community. They adopted the same attitude whenever they had to meet an enemy in battle. Later, the Quran speaks about those who suffered a reversal in the Battle of Uhud. When they were required to go on a new campaign the following day, they showed that they could rise to the highest level of steadfastness: *Those to whom humanity said:*

*Truly humanity has gathered against you so dread them. But in increased them in believe and they said: God is enough for us and how excellent is He, the Trustee.* (3:173)

Remembering God at the time of encountering an enemy is useful in a variety of ways. To start with, it provides a direct link with the Power that can never be overcome. It is a demonstration of placing all trust in God who is certain to support His servants. At the same time it brings to the forefront the nature of the battle, its causes and goals. It is a battle for God, to establish His authority on earth and to overthrow all tyrants who try to usurp this authority. In short it is a fight to make God's word supreme. It has no motive of imposing the authority of any person, group or nation, or making any personal or national gain. It also emphasizes the importance of the duty of remembering God even at the most difficult time.

Obedience to God and His Messenger ensures that the believers go into the battle submitting themselves totally to God. There will be no room for any cause of conflict or dispute: **(8:46)** People fall into dispute when they have different authorities which they look to for leadership and guidance, or when desire is the ultimate factor that shapes people's views and ideas. When people obey only God and His Messenger, the main cause of dispute between them disappears, no matter how much their views differ over the question under discussion. Having different views is never a cause of dispute and conflict. What causes conflict is desire, making everyone insist that his view is the one to follow, even when it appears to be wrong. Desire causes 'self' to be placed in opposition to 'right' and attaching more importance to self in the first place. For this reason, Muslims are given this directive to obey God and His Messenger at the time of battle. It is a question of discipline that is essential in battle. It is an obedience to the High Command which reflects itself in a genuine obedience to the leader in command of the Muslim forces. Thus it is different from the rigid and superficial discipline in the ranks of armies that do not fight for God's cause, and in which loyalty to commanders is not based on loyalty and submission to God. The gulf between the two is great indeed. Steadfastness and patience in adversity are also essential in any fight, whether internal within oneself, or on the battlefield: **(8:46)** Being with God will certainly ensure success and victory for those who are steadfast.

The last directive is given as follows: **(8:47)** The purpose of this directive is to protect the community of believers against going out to fight, with an attitude of conceit, keen to show off, boasting of their own strength and using the blessing of power God has granted them for a purpose other than that of which He approves. Believers

go out to fight for God's cause, to establish His authority and Lordship over human life, and to ensure people's submission to Him alone. They seek to destroy the tyrants who usurp God's authority and claim sovereignty for themselves, having no basis for their claim in the form of a permission granted by God or His law. They fight to declare the liberation of humanity throughout the world from any bondage to any authority, since such bondage represents a humiliation of the human being. Believers fight in order to protect people's rights, freedom and integrity, not to humiliate other races and peoples through the abuse of the power God has granted them. They go out to fight seeking no personal gain whatsoever. Victory brings them nothing other than having obeyed God's command to go on jihad, to establish the code of living He has revealed, to make God's word supreme and to seek His grace and pleasure. Even the spoils of war that believers may gain are viewed as an aspect of grace bestowed by none other than God.

### FALSE PRETENSES, FALSE PROMISES

The believers had just seen the Quraysh leave their homes full of self-conceit, eager to be praised by others. They also witnessed the consequences of such an arrogant demonstration. The Quraysh mustered all their pride, power and prestige to defy God and His Messenger. By the end of the day the Quraysh returned home with their pride tarnished, their prestige shattered and their might totally destroyed. Here God reminds the community of believers of a recent situation that gave them much to think about: **(8:47)**

The Chapter goes on to describe how Satan persuaded the ungrateful to go out for a fight that led to their defeat and humiliation: **(8:48)**

Following our chosen approach in this commentary, we prefer not to discuss matters which relate to the world that lies beyond our human perception in any degree of detail, when we do not have a Quranic statement. Such matters require a statement of this type to formulate a conceptual belief. However, we do not adopt a negative attitude either. In this particular case, we have a Quranic statement that tells us that Satan did make their deeds seem fair to the ungrateful and encouraged them to raise an army and march to fight the Muslims, promising them support and protection. Later when the two hosts were within sight of each other: **(8:48)** Thus he let them down, keeping no promise he had given them, and leaving them to suffer the outcome of their actions on their own. We have no idea how he made their actions seem fair to them, nor how he said to them that they could not be overcome by any human power on that particular

day. Neither do we have any idea how Satan promised them support and assured them of his protection, nor how he turned on his heels and said what is reported in the Quran of his statements.

We cannot say anything about 'how' all these matters took place and in what form they were done. Everything that concerns Satan belongs to the realm that lies beyond the reach of our human perception. We have no way of knowing exactly 'how' such matters occur, except in as much as the Quranic statement relates. The statement we have here confirms the event but does not mention how it happened. We prefer not to go any further than that.

### Deception Compounded by Short-Sightedness

While Satan was working hard, trying to delude the ungrateful and encouraging them to go out in force to fight the believers then abandoning them at their time of need, the hypocrites and those who were sick at heart thought the worst of what fate the Muslims would be facing. They looked at the small band of believers facing up to a much superior force. Thinking only in material terms, they felt that the believers brought upon themselves a woeful doom, deluded by their faith, thinking that faith would bring them victory or at least give them protection: **(8:49)** Some scholars say about this group that they were Makkans who looked favorably upon the Quranic message but who stopped short of accepting it. They went out with the Quraysh army, uncertain of their own attitude. When they realized how superior the forces of the ungrateful were they said this about the Muslims.

The hypocrites and those who are sick at heart are unable to understand the true causes of defeat or victory. They only look at appearances and have no means of understanding the true nature of anything that is not physically apparent. They cannot appreciate the power of faith and what effect trusting God and relying on Him bring about. They cannot see how believers cannot be overawed by forces that do not rely on a firm belief in God. Therefore it is understandable that they should think the believers to be deluded by their faith, bringing themselves to ruin as they faced a far superior force.

Any situation may have the same physical appearance in the eyes of believers and those whose hearts are devoid of faith. What is different, however, is how they look at any situation and how they evaluate it. The ungrateful do not see anything beyond the physical appearance, while those who have faith see the reality that lies beyond it. They are able to see all the forces that have an influence on it and balance between them accurately. The fact that believers understand and from which they derive reassurance is that to which the

conclusion of this sign alludes: **(8:49)** But this fact is withheld from those hearts that have no faith. Yet it is the one that tilts the balance and determines the outcome of the conflict between the two groups every time and everywhere.

On the day of Badr the hypocrites and those who were sick at heart said about the Muslim group, *their way of life has deluded these people.* This is the same thing that such people say whenever they see the advocates of the Quranic message confronting the mightier forces of tyranny, when their main equipment is basically this religion, their unshakeable faith in its truth, their burning desire to defend what God has made sacred and their reliance on God and trust in Him.

The hypocrites and those who are sick at heart stand idle, watching the advocates of the Quranic message as they firmly stand up to the forces of falsehood, deriding their attitude that makes little of the dangers to which they expose themselves when they take on such mightier forces. At the same time, they are full of admiration for such people who are willing to take such great risks for their cause. They cannot understand why anyone should be willing to be exposed to such great dangers. They view everything in life, including faith and religion, as little more than a business deal. If they feel they can profit by it then they will take it up without question, but if it involves risk taking, then they do not want to have anything to do with it. They are unable to see matters from the point of view of a believer, and they cannot evaluate matters using the perspective of faith. From a believer's point of view, the deal is a highly profitable one in all circumstances. It leads to one of the two best eventualities: victory which brings about the implementation of faith in practical life or martyrdom which ensures admittance into heaven. Besides, the balance of power is viewed differently by the believer. God Himself is involved, but the hypocrites and those who are sick at heart do not take God's power into account.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself?

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others.
I remembered I have sometimes failed to speak my mind when I felt strongly about something and then later felt resentment.

## LESSON 88(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)

### SIGNS 8:49-8:58

**Madinah:** *Mention when the ones who are hypocrites say*
*and those who, in their hearts, is a sickness:*
*Their way of life deluded these,*

*but whoever puts his trust in God.*
*Then, truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* (8:49)
*And if **you** would see when those who were ungrateful*
*are called to themselves by the angels,*
*they are striking their faces and their backs saying:*
*Experience the punishment of the burning.* (8:50 )
*That is because of what your hands put forward of evil and,*
*truly, God is not unjust to His servants.* (8:51)
*In like manner of the people of Pharaoh*
*—and of those before them—*
*they were ungrateful for the signs of God*
*so God took them for their impieties.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Severe in repayment.* (8:52)
*Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Alter*
*a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk*
*unless they first alter what is within themselves.*
*And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)
*In like manner of the people of Pharaoh,*
*and those before them, they denied the signs of their Lord,*
*so We caused them to perish for their impieties.*
*And We drowned the people of Pharaoh.*
*And they all had been ones who are unjust.* (8:54)
*Truly, the worst of moving creatures with God*
*are those who were ungrateful, so they will not believe.* (8:55)
*Those with whom **you** have made a contract,*
*again, they break their compact every time*
*and they are not God-conscious.* (8:56)
*So if **you** have come upon them in war, then, break them up,*
*whoever is behind them,*
*so that perhaps they will recollect.* (8:57)
*And if **you** have feared treachery from a folk,*
*then, dissolve the relationship with them equally.*
*Truly, God loves not the ones who are traitors.* (8:58)

## COMMENTARY°

### DIVINE JUSTICE FOR ALL

At this juncture the Chapter portrays a scene of God's direct intervention in the battle. We see the angels acting on God's instructions and by His permission, reproaching the ungrateful and meting out punishment to them. They gather their souls in a very harsh manner and dole out to them the sort of treatment that befits their arrogance and conceit. Even in the most difficult of times they remind them of their evil deeds and tell them of their inevitable destiny.

There is no injustice in what they are about to suffer. It is only what they deserve. When this scene is painted, the Chapter follows it by a statement making clear that punishing the ungrateful for their misdeeds is a constant law that God has set into operation: **(8:52-8:54)**

It is according to this law that He took Pharaoh and his people to task, and according to it He takes to task any person or community guilty of the same type of action: **(8:50-8:54)**

The first two of these signs may be intended to refer to what the ungrateful were made to suffer at the Battle of Badr when the angels took part in the fighting carrying out God's orders. He had issued to them an express order: **(8:12-8:13)** When we commented on this statement, we mentioned that we do not know how the angels strike the necks of human beings or how they strike off their fingertips. However, our ignorance of how this is done should not tempt us to try to give this statement any meaning other than its apparent one, which makes it clear that there was an order from God to the angels to strike. We know that the angels: *who rebel not whatever God commands them and they accomplish what they are commanded.* (66:6) In this case these two signs serve as a reminder of what the angels did on the day of Badr and an explanation of what they actually did to the ungrateful.

These two signs, however, may also be taken as a reference to a continuing situation that applies whenever the angels gather the souls of ungrateful. In this case the opening phrase, *if you could but see*, may be understood as an address to anyone with eyes to see. This type of address is used frequently to direct attention to certain matters that need to be contemplated.

Whichever possibility we take, the Quranic statement portrays a fearful picture of the ungrateful as the angels gather their souls, adding humiliation to their misery and combining physical suffering with death: **(8:50)** The mode of expression then changes from that of reporting to an address: This serves to bring the scene alive as though it is happening now in front of our eyes. We almost see the fire of hell and how it burns fiercely. The ungrateful are severely reproached as they are pushed into it: **(8:51)**

This statement and the scene of the punishment of burning it portrays raise the question: is it a warning the angels give to the ungrateful pointing out to them what they are going to suffer and showing it as if it is taking place now? Or do they actually suffer the punishment of burning as soon as their souls are gathered by the angels? Both situations are possible. There is no reason to preclude either. We do not wish to add anything further because this is again something that belongs to the world that lies beyond human percep-

tion. It is known only to God. As for us, we only need to believe that it will definitely take place. Indeed there is nothing to stop it happening. But when will that be? The answer is known only to God whose knowledge is absolute, encompassing the universe and all that it contains.

The Chapter then states a fundamental fact that is relevant to this scene. The infliction of suffering and humiliation on the ungrateful is a permanent law that does not change. It was set into operation a long time ago and it continues to operate without fail: **(8:52)** God does not determine the fate of human beings haphazardly or on the basis of sudden whims. Their fate follows a law that is meant to apply at all times. What happened to those ungrateful at Badr is likely to happen to them at all times. The same type of thing happened to Pharaoh's people and to other communities before them, because **(8:52)** They could not protect themselves against His punishment: **(8:52)**

### WHAT CHANGES GOD'S BLESSINGS?

God had bestowed His grace on them, giving them plenty of provisions, granting them power, and allowing their generations to follow one another. All this God grants to human beings to test them so that they may choose whether to be grateful to Him for His blessings or not. But they chose to be ungrateful, denying God and using His blessings to tyrannize. They felt that the power they were given was theirs by right and they denied God's revelations. Therefore they deserved their severe punishment in accordance with the law God had set in operation. Therefore, God altered the blessings with which He had favored them, and destroyed them altogether: **(8:53-8:54)**

God destroyed them only after they had denied His revelations. He did not punish them with destruction prior to that, although they were ungrateful, because He is Compassionate, Merciful: *We would not be ones who punish until We have raised up a Messenger.* (17:15) Pharaoh's people and those who had gone before them adopting the same attitude of denying God's revelations and suffering the punishment of destruction are described here as wrongdoers. This is a very frequent usage in the Quran, depicting the rejection of the Quranic message or the association of partners with God as wrongdoing.

We need to reflect a little on the statement that this sign makes: **(8:53)** It confirms the essential aspect of fairness in God's treatment of human beings. He does not deprive them of any favor He has granted them unless they change their intentions, attitudes, behaviors and general situation. By doing so, they deserve that God should alter what He has given them by way of testing them and withdrawing the

favors and blessings He has bestowed on them. They have shown no gratitude for such blessings and favors. On the other hand, God bestows a great honor on the human being when He makes His will applicable to the human being on the basis of the human being's own actions. A change in the fate of human beings depends on a practical change in their own intentions, behavior, practices and general situation. All this they choose for themselves. Moreover, human beings are given a great responsibility, commensurate to the great honor God has granted them. They can ensure that the grace and favors God grants them remain permanently with them and that they are given an increase of this by knowing, appreciating and showing gratitude. On the other hand, they can ensure that all these are removed from them if they behave with arrogance, deny God's favors, entertain evil intentions and adopt deviant practices.

This great fact is central to the Quranic concept of the human being, how God's will applies to him as well as his relationship with the universe and what takes place in it. Here we see the position of honor granted by God to the human being and we appreciate the latitude the human being has been given in determining his own destiny and shaping the events that take place around him. He is indeed an actor who makes his contribution by God's permission. Indeed the working of God's will takes place through his deeds and actions. Thus the human being is freed from the humiliating state of passivity imposed on him by materialistic philosophies which regard him as a passive creature who has no influence on the major trends that continue their inevitable movement with total disregard to him and his actions. These include economy, history and evolution. According to these philosophies, man has no option other than to submit to these trends with all humility.

The same fact makes it absolutely clear that there is an inevitable relationship in human life between action and reward. It also gives us a clear idea of God's absolute, unfailing justice that transforms this relationship into a law set into operation by God's will. It ensures that not a single one of God's servants will suffer the slightest injustice: **(8:51-8:54)** All praise be to God, the Lord of all the worlds.

### STRIKING TERROR INTO THE ENEMY

Those who believe in the Quranic message should have a clear understanding of the nature of its method of operation. It is essential that the Quranic message should have real power as well as a reputation of power. Thus, as it starts its mission to liberate humanity all over the world from tyranny, it strikes fear into the hearts of all tyrants who do their utmost to check its tide. Those who think that

this religion will confine itself to preaching and to the explanation of its message when the forces of evil try to put every type of impediment in its way have little understanding of its true nature.

This is the first ruling which deals with the case of actual violation of treaties that have been concluded with the Muslim community. The violators are to be dealt a heavy blow so that they, as well as those who sympathize with them, are intimidated and are actually overawed by the Muslims.

The second ruling deals with a different situation: that of fearing and expecting treachery. There should be clear signs that a particular group or community are actually contemplating such violation of a treaty. In this case the Messenger is directed to take the following approach: **(8:58)**

The Quranic message here sets out a code of practice. When a treaty is concluded, the Muslim community will undoubtedly honor it. If they fear that the other party is about to violate it, then the Muslims declare the termination of the treaty, without any attempt to cheat or deceive the other party. What is meant here is an open and clear termination of a treaty so that each party realizes that peaceful relations are over. The Quranic message attaches a very high value to honesty and integrity in order to ensure peace and security. Launching a treacherous attack on people who rely on covenants that remain in force is alien to the nature of the Quranic message. The Quranic message does not terrorize those who have not taken precautions even when it fears treachery from them. However, when a treaty has been publicly terminated, then trying to outwit the enemy is perfectly acceptable because each side should be on its guard. If an enemy falls for a trick, they pay the price of naivety. No method of outwitting the enemy can then be described as treachery.

The Quranic message wants humanity to rise above worldly temptations and to be sublime. Therefore, it does not allow treachery for the sake of achieving a cheap victory at a time when it strives for the noblest of causes and aims. People who have honorable aims cannot utilize dishonorable means. The Quranic message finds treachery repugnant and looks at traitors who violate their treaties with contempt. Therefore, it does not accept that Muslims violate their covenants for the achievement of any objective, noble as it may be. The human soul is a complete whole. When it allows itself to resort to disgraceful means it cannot maintain its noble aims. He is not a Muslim who claims that the ends justify the means. Such a principle is alien to Quranic thinking and cannot fit with Quranic sensitivities. Within the human self there can be no gulf to separate the ends from the means. Reaching a clean shore does not tempt a Muslim to walk

through a muddy pool, because the shore will not remain clean after dirty feet have walked there. Therefore: **(8:58)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask: What exactly is the question I am trying to ask?

How does it relate to my goals, purposes, and needs?

1. Wherever possible take questions one by one. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can.

2. Study the question to make clear the kind of question you are dealing with. Figure out, for example, what sorts of things you are going to have to do to answer it. Distinguish questions over which you have some control from questions over which you have no control. Set aside the questions over which you have no control, concentrating your efforts on those questions you can potentially answer.

3. Figure out the information you need and actively seek that information.

4. Carefully analyze and interpret the information you collect, drawing what reasonable inferences you can.

5. Figure out your options for action. What can you do in the short term? In the long term? Distinguish questions under your control from questions beyond your control. Recognize explicitly your limitations as far as money, time, and power.

6. Evaluate your options, taking into account your advantages and disadvantages in the situation you are in.

7. Adopt a strategic approach to the question and follow through on that strategy. This may involve direct action or a carefully thought-through wait-and-see strategy.

8. When you act, monitor the implications of your action as you begin to emerge. Be ready at a moment's notice to revise your strategy if the situation requires it. Be prepared to shift your strategy or your analysis or question, or all three, as more information about the question becomes available to you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.
I learned to frequently evaluate my reading.
I am trying to read the Quranic text actively.
I am asking questions as I read.
I am learning to distinguish what I understand from what I don't.

## LESSON 88(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
## SIGNS 8:59-8:64

**Madinah:** *Assume you not that*
*those who were ungrateful will outdo Me.*
*Truly, they will never weaken Him.* (8:59)
*And prepare for them whatever you were able of strength,*
*including a string of horses, to put fear in the enemy of God*
*and your enemy and others*
*besides whom you know them not.*
*God knows them.*
*And whatever thing you spend in the way of God,*
*the account will be paid in full to you*
*and you will not be wronged.* (8:60)
*And if they tended towards peace,*
*then, tend you towards it and put your trust in God.*
*Truly, He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (8:61)
*And if they want to deceive you, then, truly, God is Enough.*
*It is He Who confirmed you with His help*
*and with the ones who believe.* (8:62)
*And He brought their hearts together.*
*If you had spent all that is in and on the earth,*
*you would not have brought together their hearts,*
*except God brought them together.*
*Truly, He is Almighty, Wise.* (8:63 )

*O Messenger! God is Enough for **you** and for whoever followed **you** among the ones who believe.* (8:64)

## COMMENTARY°

In return for such clear honesty God promises victory to the Muslims and He tells them that the ungrateful have no real power: **(8:59)** Their treachery will not enable them to take the lead and outstrip the Muslims, because God will not abandon the Muslims or allow the traitors to triumph. The ungrateful are too weak to escape from God when He moves against them. Nor can they escape from the Muslims when God is supporting them. Therefore, those who resort only to clean and lawful means, seeking God's pleasure, need not worry when they see others who employ foul means surging ahead. They achieve victory through God's help, because they strive to implement His law and make His word supreme. Their efforts aim to liberate humanity from the worship of creatures, so that it may worship only the Creator.

The Quranic message, however, sets out to make real preparations that are within the capability of the Muslims so that victory becomes achievable. It does not raise the sights of the Muslim community towards that sublime horizon without making sure that it has firm ground on which it can stand. The Quranic message also takes every practical step which has been proven through experience to be of immense value in the achievement of victory. The Quranic message also makes sure that the Muslim community is well prepared for its practical tasks that serve its sublime objectives: **(8:60)**

### GETTING ALL FORCES READY

The Quranic message certainly needs physical might which is kept ready to use for the fulfilment of its mission of liberating humanity throughout the world. The first purpose that this power serves is to establish peace and security for those who choose to accept the Quranic message so that they do not suffer any persecution as a result of their choice. Secondly, it deters the enemies of the Quranic message from contemplating aggression against it the land of the Quranic message. Thirdly, such enemies should be so intimidated that they do not ever entertain any thought of trying to check the tide of the Quranic message as it goes about the fulfilment of its mission of liberation. Lastly, this power is to be used to break any force that claims the attributes of God and enforces its laws and legislation on human beings and refuses to accept that all sovereignty belongs to God alone.

The Quranic message is not merely a system of divinity that is established once it has been consciously accepted as a faith and practised as a set of worship rituals. The Quranic message is a practical code of living which stands face to face against other codes and systems that are supported by physical force. Therefore, the Quranic message has no option but to break those forces and remove the authorities that implement those codes which stand in opposition to its code of living devised and revealed by God Himself.

No Muslim should ever mince words when he declares this basic truth. There is nothing to be ashamed of in the nature of the Quranic approach. The Quranic message does not have a man-made system, and does not seek to establish the authority of a leader, a state, a class, or a race.

This is the fundamental truth which needs to be driven home to those defeatists who put the Quranic message on the defensive, trying to seek excuses for jihad in history.

It is pertinent to know the limits of the Muslim community's duty to prepare its forces. The Quranic sign states: *And prepare for them whatever you are able of strength* ... **(8:60)** This goes as far as the maximum ability of the Muslims, so that they do not overlook any element of power which they are able to get ready. The sign also makes clear the prime purpose for which such forces are mobilized: *including a string of horses, to put fear in the enemy of God and your enemy and others besides whom you know them not. God knows them.* **(8:60)**

The objective, then, is to strike terror into the hearts of God's enemies who are also the enemies of the advocates of the Quranic message throughout the world, be they open with their hostility and known to the Muslim community, or others who may be discreet with their real feelings, not openly stating their hostile attitude towards the Quranic message. God is certainly aware of their true feelings and sympathies. Such people are intimidated by the might of the Quranic message even though they may not suffer its consequences directly. The Muslims are required to gather all the strength they can have so that they remain feared by other people. This is essential so that God's word remains supreme and all submission is to God alone.

Acquiring such forces and having them ready can only be done if the resources are there. Since the Quranic system lays much stress on collective responsibility and mutual support, the duty of jihad goes hand in hand with the duty of spending money for God's cause: **(8:60)** Both jihad and spending money for God's cause are thus purged of all worldly and personal aims and purposes as well as all national and community feelings and aspirations. They must always

be pure, undertaken 'for God's cause,' to establish His authority and to earn His pleasure.

Thus, right at the outset, the Quranic rules out any war undertaken for the glory of individuals and states. It rejects all campaigns that seek to exploit resources and open markets, or to subjugate and humiliate other communities. The Quranic message has nothing to do with any war that tries to establish the superiority of one class, race, nation, or state over another. The only type of campaign which the Quranic message approves of is one undertaken for God's cause. Needless to say, God does not wish to grant supremacy to any one race, nation, class, or individual. He only wants His own sovereignty and authority to be recognized by all people. God is in no need of anyone or any community. The recognition of His sovereignty and submission to Him alone bring honor, freedom, goodness and blessings to all humanity.

### WHEN PEACE IS A REAL PROSPECT

The third ruling given in this passage deals with the case of those who wish to live in peace with the Muslim community and give clear indications by word and action that they are genuine in their desire to have a friendly and peaceful relationship with the Muslims. With respect to these, the Messenger is instructed: **(8:61)** The use of the term 'incline' here is very apt as it gives connotations of a gentle attitude that prefers peace and friendly relations. The instruction to be inclined to peace is coupled with that of placing our trust in God who hears and knows everything and is certainly aware of all that is harbored behind words and appearances. Placing our trust in God is sufficient for ensuring protection and security.

What we conclude is that there is no final rulings of universal application in this sign: **(8:61)** At the time when this Chapter was revealed, God instructed His Messenger to remain at peace with those groups who refrained from fighting him and the Muslims, whether they entered into a formal treaty with the Muslims or not.

### WHERE TO PLACE ALL TRUST

In the early days after his settlement in Madinah, the Messenger concluded a peace and defense treaty with the Jews and the ungrateful in and around Madinah. The treaty made it clear that the supreme authority in Madinah belonged to the Messenger, and committed the other groups to defend the city against the Quraysh. The signatories agreed that they would not extend any support to any aggressor who attacked Madinah. None would make any pact with the ungrateful who were hostile to the Muslims without the prior agreement of the

Messenger. At the same time, God instructed the Messenger to extend peaceful and friendly treatment to any group who were inclined towards peace, even though they did not sign a treaty with him. He was to maintain that peaceful situation as long as they were committed to peace. All this changed later, as already explained.

When the events known as the Expedition of the Moat took place, with the Arab ungrateful mobilizing large forces and surrounding Madinah, the Qurayzah Jews violated their treaty with the Muslim state. The Messenger was worried that the Muslims might be in very serious trouble as a result of a planned pincer attack. To ease the situation the Messenger offered to make a deal with the chiefs of the second largest force, namely the Ghatafan tribe, which would have them withdrawing all their forces in return for having one-third of Madinah's harvest. That agreement would have left the pagans alone in the position of attack and the Muslims would most probably have been able to gain a quick victory against them. This was only an offer and no agreement was signed.

The practical nature of the Quranic message makes it necessary to face up to any situation with adequate means. The Quranic message takes a practical and flexible approach which is at the same time clear and firmly based. If we seek in Quranic teachings a basis for positive action to deal with any practical situation, we will not need to twist Quranic or ahadith statements, or give them arbitrary interpretations. What is needed is to fear God and to refrain from any attempt to make His faith subservient to evil and ignorant realities. We must also guard against adopting a defeatist attitude which puts the Quranic message on the defensive when it is a faith that is meant to govern and regulate people's lives. It satisfies, from a position of strength, all the needs of practical life. Praise be to God for having guided us to His faith.

### UNITING BELIEVERS' HEARTS

When God instructed His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad to accept the state of non-belligerency from any community which offered him it and to incline to peace whenever they so inclined, He also directed him to rely on Him and place his trust in Him. He further reassured him that He knows precisely what all people hide as guarded secrets: **(8:61)**

Furthermore, God assured him that they would not be able to deceive him, should they try to do so. If their peace offer was merely a cover-up for their real intentions of treachery, he could always rely on God who is sure to protect him. It was He who granted him victory in the Battle of Badr, when He strengthened him with His own

help and with the believers. It was He who established their brotherhood based on faith and united their hearts which could not have been united by any other means: **(8:62-8:63)**

The Messenger is here reassured that he would not need anything other than God's help, for that is more than sufficient for protection from any treachery. It was He who gave strength and support to His Messenger in the first place, when he rallied the believers round him. They were true to their pledges. They came to be a united force, after they had had divergent loyalties. They were often in open hostility against one another and fought their tribal wars with determined ferocity. The reference here may be to the two tribes of Madinah, the Aws and the Khazraj, who constituted the Helpers. In pre-Quranic days, their enmity and protracted disputes were so fierce that there could not be any sort of peace between them, let alone a bond of brotherhood which the Quranic message forged. However, this sign may also be intended as a reference to the Emigrants who migrated with the Messenger from Makkah to Madinah. They also had the same sort of internal disputes and enmity as the Helpers. Or it may be that the sign means them all together. Indeed the whole of Arabia was alike in its internal hostilities.

It was a great miracle which could never have been accomplished by anyone other than God, through the faith He revealed. Hearts that had always been hostile, and natures that had been rebellious, were solidly united. Their hostility was replaced by love and unity of a standard that serves as a symbol for life in heaven: *And We will tear any grudges from their breasts. They will be as brothers on couches, one facing the other.* (15:47)

The Quranic message makes its appeal to humanity on the basis of pure love that has its roots in faith in God and is nourished by dedication to His cause. When human beings make a favorable response to that appeal, the miracle that can only be worked out by God takes place in reality.

### MATCHING SUPERIOR FORCES

The Chapter moves on to reassure the Messenger and the Muslim community yet again that God is on their side. This is more than enough for them to ensure their victory. The Messenger is also instructed to encourage the believers to fight for God's cause. They are equal to a force that outnumbers them by ten to one. Even at their weakest, the believers are more than a match for twice their number. **(8:64-8:66)**

We pause here a little to contemplate the difference between God's invincible, overwhelming power and the small force which

tries to suppress the advocates of the divine message. The difference is too huge to allow any meaningful comparison. Therefore, the outcome of the battle is a foregone conclusion. This is what is implied in the statement: **(8:64)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (*birr*). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what they are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on their meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what they mean from experiences they have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what they mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

### DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are.

However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

## Lesson 88(9). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empowering Constancy, Courage

**How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?**

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

## Quranic Chapter 8: The Spoils (al-Anfal)
## Signs 8:65-8:69

**Madinah:** *O Messenger! Encourage fighting*
*to the ones who believe.*
*If there be twenty of you, ones who remain steadfast,*
*they will vanquish two hundred.*
*And if there be a hundred of you, they will vanquish*
*a thousand of those who were ungrateful*
*because they are a folk who understand not.* (8:65)
*Now God lightened your burden from you*

*for He knew that there was a weakness in you.*
*So if there would be a hundred of you,*
*ones who remain steadfast, they will vanquish two hundred.*
*And if there would be a thousand of you*
*they will vanquish two thousand*
*with the permission of God.*
*And God is with the ones who remain steadfast.* (8:66)
*It had not been for a Messenger*
*that he would have prisoners of war*
*unless he gives a sound thrashing in the region.*
*You want the advantages of the present,*
*but God wants the world to come.*
*And God is Almighty, Wise.* (8:67)
*Were it not for a preceding prescription from God,*
*you would, certainly, be afflicted with a tremendous punishment*
*for what you took.* (8:68)
*Eat of what you gained as booty,*
*lawful, what is good. And be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (8:69)

## COMMENTARY°

This is followed by an order to the Messenger to urge the believers to fight for God's cause, now that every soul is ready for the engagement, every heart is full with expectation and all are confident, reassured: **(8:65)** Rouse them to arms, for they are a match for their enemies, even though they may be much inferior in number: (8:65) The reason for such a great difference in real power comes as a surprise, but it is true, incisive: **(8:65)**

What is the link between understanding and victory? There may be very little on the surface, but the link is very real and strong. The believers are distinguished by the fact that they know their way which they have chosen after deep thought. They understand the course they follow in this life and they are well aware of the purpose of their existence and their goals. They have a perfect understanding of the nature of Godhead and the nature of servitude to God. They know that God must be the only master in the universe, and that none of His servants can associate any partners with Him. They realize that they, the Muslim community, are the group that follow divine guidance, whose task is to liberate humanity, by God's will, from servitude to creatures so that they worship God alone. They are the ones to be entrusted with power on earth, not to exercise superiority over others, but to ensure that the word of God reigns supreme. Their mission is to struggle for God's cause, build a proper human civi-

lization, and establish the rule of justice among all people.

All this understanding pours enlightenment, confidence, strength and reassurance into the believers' hearts. They are thus motivated to go into their campaigns of jihad with certainty of the outcome. This alone multiplies their strength. Their enemies, on the other hand, are "devoid of understanding". Their hearts are sealed, and their eyes are blinded. Their forces are without power, although they may appear to be superior. That is because their link to the source of real power has been severed.

This relative power of one to ten is the original balance of power between the believers who are full of understanding and the ungrateful who are devoid of it. Even when the Muslims who remain steadfast are at their weakest, this ratio is two to one: **(8:66)**

Some scholars and Quranic commentators have taken these signs to imply a commandment to the believers that, when they are strong, no one may run away from ten of the ungrateful, or from two in the case of weakness. There are considerable differences on points of detail, which we prefer not to go into. It is our considered opinion that these signs make a statement of fact in estimating the believers' strength when they confront their enemies. This is an estimate made according to God's own measure, which is the true measure. These signs are also meant to inform the believers of this fact so that they have more confidence and reassurance. God certainly knows best but in our considered view, these statements do not stipulate rules to be implemented.

### RULINGS ON CAPTIVES OF WAR

The Chapter moves on to outline certain rulings that are relevant to taking prisoners of war and what to do with them. This comes in the context of the Messenger's action with regard to the captives taken in the Battle of Badr. The captives themselves are invited to accept the faith, which provides them with a prospect giving them more than fair compensation for the loss they suffered.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### Learn to express your feelings

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

## LESSON 88(10). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

### WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

### WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: do *good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

## QURANIC CHAPTER 8: THE SPOILS (AL-ANFAL)
## SIGNS 8:70-8:75

**Madinah:** *O Messenger!*
*Say to whom are in your hands of the prisoners of war:*
*If God knows any good in your hearts,*
*He will give you better than what was taken from you*

*and He will forgive you.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (8:70)
*But if they want treachery against* ***you,***
*they, surely, betrayed God before,*
*so He gave* ***you*** *power over them.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (8:71)
*Truly, those who believed and emigrated*
*and struggled with their wealth and their lives in the way of God,*
*and those who gave refuge and helped,*
*those are protectors, some of some others.*
*And those who believed, but emigrate not,*
*you have no duty of friendship to them at all*
*until they emigrate.*
*And if they asked you for help in the way of life,*
*then, it would be upon you to help them, but against the folk*
*whom between you and between them there is a solemn promise.*
*And God is Seeing of what you do.* (8:72)
*And those who were ungrateful,*
*some are protectors of some others.*
*If you accomplish not allying with other believers*
*there will be persecution on the earth*
*and the hateful sin of corruption.* (8:73)
*And those who believed and emigrated*
*and struggled in the way of God*
*and those who gave refuge and helped,*
*those, they are the ones who truthfully believe.*
*For them is forgiveness and generous provision.* (8:74)
*And those who believed afterwards,*
*and emigrated and struggled beside you, then, those are of you.*
*And those imbued through wombs, blood relations,*
*some are more deserving than some*
*others in what is prescribed by God,*
*truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (8:75)

## Commentary°

### Seeking to Deceive God

Now the Chapter addresses those captives, giving them hope and promising a future which is far better than the life they used to lead. They are also promised what is superior to the property they lost, in addition to forgiveness and mercy: **(8:70)** But all this depends on them opening their hearts to the light of faith. God will then find goodness in them. That goodness is the very fact of believing in God. It is goodness at its purest. Indeed all goodness stems from it.

From the point of view of the Quranic message, keeping prisoners of war in the hands of believers is only a means of opening up the essence of goodness that may be deep in their hearts. Thus their nature becomes recipient to the call to accept the divine faith and follow guidance. No vengeance is to be exacted on those prisoners of war. Such was the practice of the Byzantines and other conquerors. But Islam follows a totally different approach.

At the same time that the captives are given this prospect of hope, they are warned against any attempt to play false with God's Messenger. They have already experienced the outcome of playing false to God: **(8:71)** Their treachery to God took the form of associating partners with Him after He had formed their nature to always recognize Him as the only Lord, but they were never true to their pledges. If they seek to play false with God's Messenger when they are captives in his hands, they should remember the result of their first treachery which led them to be taken prisoner and gave mastery over them to God's Messenger and his followers. God is certainly aware of the thoughts they harbour and He is wise as He inflicts punishment on them: **(8:71)**

### DEFINITION OF RELATIONS

The Chapter's final passage outlines the internal and external relations of the Muslim community. Rulings concerning these relations are also outlined. This gives us a clear idea of the nature of the Muslim community itself and the basis on which it is founded. The essential ties which bring that community together are not those of blood, land, race, history, language or economy. Ties of family, country, nation or financial interests are of no importance. The only ties which are given weight and importance are those of faith, organized movement and its leadership. Therefore, those who believe, migrate to the land of the revelation of the Quranic message, abandon all their earlier links with their own land, homes and nation, sacrifice their lives and possessions and strive for God's cause, as well as those who give them shelter and support and join them in their faith under the same leadership and in the same movement—all those are friends and protectors of one another. On the other hand, those who believe but have not yet migrated may not aspire to such status that provides for mutual protection. This is because they have not yet pledged their full loyalty to the Quranic leadership and have not yet abandoned all ties with the ungrateful, except the bond of faith. Within the Muslim community itself, blood relations have priority in inheritance and other matters. The ungrateful, on the other hand, are also patrons and allies of one another. These are the main lines delineating loyalties

and relationships as shown in these very clear signs: **(8:72-8:75)**

### LOYALTY IN A MUSLIM COMMUNITY

In the early days of the Quranic message, until the major Battle of Badr, the social bond that tied Muslims together involved inheritance and obligatory mutual support, sharing in the payment of any blood money for accidental killing. These ties replaced those of blood and family. When the state was established and acquired additional strength after God enabled it to score its most remarkable victory at Badr, the obligation of giving loyalty and support was maintained. As for inheritance and help in the payment of blood money, these were now confined, by God's order, to blood relatives within the Muslim community itself.

The migration mentioned here as a condition of such mutual commitment, in its special and general aspects, refers to the physical departure, by those who can, from the land of the ungrateful to the land of the Quranic revelation. Those who were able to migrate but chose not to do so, because they did not want to abandon their ties, whether financial or family, with the ungrateful had no claim for protection by the Muslim community. This provision applied to some Bedouins and some individuals in Makkah who were not prevented from migrating. The Muslim community had an obligation to come to the support of those believers, particularly when they appealed for help on account of being harassed or persecuted on grounds of faith. The only exception was if they wanted such help against a people with whom the Muslim community had a treaty, as such treaties had a stronger claim to be honored by the Muslims.

These statements and the rulings and provisions they outline give us a clear idea of the nature of the Muslim community, its essential factors and basic values. Nevertheless, a word about the emergence of this community and its foundation, method of action and commitments will clarify that better.

The Quranic message conveyed by God's Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad, is the last link in the long history of the call advocating submission to God alone undertaken by the noble prophets. Throughout history, this message has remained the same: that human beings should recognize their true Lord and Sustainer, God the only deity, and that they should submit to Him alone. All claims to lordship by human beings are null and void. Except for a few individuals here and there in history, humanity as a whole has never denied the existence of God or His sovereignty over the universe. It has rather erred in its understanding of His real attributes, or associated partners with Him, either in belief and worship or in assigning sovereignty.

Both of these are forms of polytheism which take people out of the faith altogether. Each one of God's Messengers taught humanity the religion God wants people to follow. After a long while, people would start to deviate and steer away from it, back into *jahiliyyah*, ignorance and polytheism, i.e. associating partners with God, either in belief and worship or in attributing sovereignty to them or both.

Throughout history the call to believe in God has had the same nature. Its purpose is self-surrender to God, which means to bring human beings into submission to the Supreme Lord alone, to free them from servitude to human beings so that they may devote themselves to the one true God. Thus, they would be freed from the clutches of human lordship and man-made laws, value systems and traditions. They would be able to acknowledge the sovereignty and authority of the one true God and follow His law in all spheres of life. This is the central issue of the Quranic message as preached by the Messenger Muhammad and all the noble prophets and messengers sent before him. It wants people to acknowledge God's sovereignty, which is readily acknowledged by all the universe. Human life must be regulated by the same authority that regulates the entire universe. Thus, human beings will not have their own code of living and will not submit to an authority other than those governing the whole universe, including those aspects of human life over which human beings have no say.

As is well known, human beings are subject to the laws of natur God has set into operation in matters that affect their birth, growin up, health, illness, death and also those that determine the consequences of their own choices in the areas where they can exercise their free-will. They cannot change God's laws governing the universe or these aspects of their own life. It is only wise then for them to submit to God in those aspects of their life in which they have a free choice. When they do so they make God's law govern both aspects of their life, the one which follows God's natural laws and the one subject to their own will. They thus bring harmony into their life.

*Jahiliyyah*, which may be defined as a state of ignorance based on giving sovereignty to human beings, is bound to bring about a clash between the natural and the free-will aspects of human life. To counter *jahiliyyah* in human life all prophets, including Muhammad, God's final Messenger, advocated submission to God alone. It must be said that ignorance is not represented by an abstract theory. In certain periods of history, ignorance had no theoretical representation whatsoever. However, it always takes the form of a living movement in a society which has its own leadership, its own concepts and values, and its own traditions, habits and feelings. It is an organized so-

ciety and there is close co-operation and loyalty between its individuals. It is always ready to defend its existence consciously or unconsciously. It crushes all elements which seem to be dangerous to its personality.

Since *jahiliyyah* takes the form of an active movement in this fashion, rather than of a theory, then any attempt to abolish *jahiliyyah* and bring people back to God through representing Islam merely as a theory is both useless and ineffective. *Jahiliyyah* controls the practical world, and for its support there is a living and active organization. In this situation, mere theoretical efforts cannot be a match for it. When the purpose is to abolish the existing system and to replace it with a new one that is different in character, principles, as well as in all general and particular aspects, it stands to reason that this new system should come into the battlefield as an organized movement and a viable community. It must also have the advantage of a more powerful strategy, social organization and firmer ties between its individuals. Only then can it hope to replace the existing system.

### THE PRACTICAL MANIFESTATION OF QURANIC THEORY

The theoretical foundation of the Quranic message, in every period of history, has been the declaration by which a human being bears witness that 'there is no deity other than God.' This means that God is the sustainer, the ruler and the real sovereign. This must take the form of a firm belief that is deeply rooted in one's heart and manifested in both addressing all worship to God alone and putting His laws into practice. This declaration cannot be deemed to have been truly made with such complete acceptance of its meaning. It is only when a person accepts its significance fully that he is deemed to be a true Muslim.

From the theoretical point of view, the establishment of this rule means that people must refer to God in conducting any aspect of their lives. They cannot decide on any affair without first referring to God's injunctions that may be relevant to it and implement them. There is only one source to know God's guidance; that is, His Messenger. Thus, in the second part of the declaration by which a person becomes a Muslim we declare that we 'bear witness that Muhammad is God's Messenger.'

This theoretical basis of the Quranic doctrine provides a complete code of living for the entirety of human life. A Muslim approaches every aspect of his individual or social life, whether within or outside the Quranic community, from the perspective of this code of living which also regulates the internal and external relations of the Muslim community.

As has already been explained, the Quranic message cannot confine itself to a mere theory which people accept as a belief practised merely as worship rituals while remaining within the structure of the existing *jahiliyyah* society. If true believers, numerous as they may be, do that, their presence within the *jahiliyyah* society cannot lead to a real and practical existence of the Quranic message. Those 'theoretical' Muslims who are part of the structure of the *jahiliyyah* society will inevitably have to respond to its requirements. Whether they like it or not, they will try, consciously or subconsciously, to fulfil its basic needs and defend its existence, and they will try to counter whatever forces or factors are threatening that existence. Any living entity will always complete these tasks using all its organs without even consulting them. In practical terms, those individuals, who are theoretically Muslims, will continue to practically support and strengthen the jahiliyyah society which they should, in theory, be trying to dismantle. They will remain living cells within its structure, supporting its continuing existence with all their talent, experience and capability. Their efforts should in fact be directed to using all their power, talent and experience for the establishment of the Quranic message.

Full and complete loyalty must be given to the new Quranic movement and the new Muslim leadership. This decisive step must be taken at the very moment when a person makes this verbal declaration bearing witness that: there is no god other than God and Muhammad is God's Messenger. A Muslim society cannot come into existence without this. It does not become a reality when it is no more than a belief held by individual Muslims, numerous as they may be. They must form themselves into an active, harmonious and cooperative group with a separate and distinct existence. Like the limbs of a human body, all individuals in this group work together to strengthen its foundation, and to enable it to expand and defend itself against any external attack which threatens its existence. In all this, they must work under a leadership that is independent of that of *jahiliyyah* society.

The role of this leadership is to regulate, harmonize and direct their efforts to the strengthening of their Quranic character and to resist and abolish the hostile, *jahiliyyah* set-up. It was in this way that the Quranic message was established the first time. It was founded on a creed which, though concise, encompassed all life. This creed immediately brought into action a viable and dynamic group of people who became independent and separate from the jahiliyyah society that rose to challenge it. It never came as an abstract theory devoid of practical existence. Similarly, it can be brought about in the future

only in the same manner.

When we understand these basic elements in the nature of the Quranic message and its method of action we can fully understand the import of the provisions that we read in the final passage of this Chapter. These organize relations within the Muslim community between those who migrated from Makkah and those who provided them with shelter and support in Madinah, and the relations of these together with those who did not migrate. All these relations are based on the understanding of the active and organized emergence of Islamic society. Equipped with this understanding, we can now look at the relevant passage and the provisions it outlines.

### DEMARCATION OF LOYALTIES IN A QURANIC SOCIETY

Everyone in Makkah who declared his or her belief that 'there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger' also disclaimed all loyalty to their family, clan, tribe or to the leadership of the *jahiliyyah* society represented by the idol worshippers. At the same time, they pledged every loyalty to Muhammad, God's Messenger, and to the nucleus of the new society emerging under his leadership. On the other hand, the *jahiliyyah* society tried to defend itself against the danger represented by the new group which broke away from it even before they clashed in the battlefield. It certainly tried to crush the new group in its early days. **(8:72-8:73)**

At the same time, the Messenger established a bond of brotherhood between the members of the new group. In other words, he transformed those individuals who broke away from the *jahiliyyah* society into a new community where a new bond of mutual loyalty was established. In the new community, the bond of faith replaced that of blood and family in other societies. Everyone in that community pledged their total loyalty to the new leadership and the new entity, thus replacing all past bonds and loyalties.

When a number of people in Madinah accepted the Quranic message and pledged their total loyalty to the Quranic leadership, they made it clear that they would obey that leadership in all situations. They also pledged to strive to protect God's Messenger against his enemies, in the same way as they protected their own women, children and property. When all this was set in place, God allowed the Muslims of Makkah to migrate to Madinah.

Thus, the new Muslim state was established in Madinah under the leadership of God's Messenger. The Messenger again established a bond of brotherhood between the Emigrants and the Helpers. Again this brotherhood replaced the bonds of blood and family with all that they entailed, including inheritance, payment of blood-money and

other compensations for which the family and the clan were liable. **(8:72)** They are mutual protectors in as much as they provide one another with support, and they are friends in as much as they inherit one another and provide help in the payment of blood-money for accidental death, and other compensations, as well as fulfilling the commitments and honoring the pledges that result from blood relations.

Other individuals then accepted the Quranic message as a faith without practically joining the Muslim community, because they did not migrate to the land of the revelation of the Quranic message where God's law was implemented and the Muslim leadership was in full control. Those individuals were not part of the Muslim community which was able to fulfil its whole existence in its own land.

These individuals were in Makkah or were Bedouins living in the areas surrounding Madinah. This means that they adopted the faith but did not join the Islamic society, nor did they pledge their full loyalty to its leadership. These were not regarded as part of the Muslim community. With these, God did not require that the Muslim community have full loyalty, in all its aspects, because they were not, in practical terms, part of Islamic society. Therefore, the rule regarding these individuals stated: **(8:72)**

This rule is perfectly understandable because it fits with the nature of the Quranic message and its practical method of action. Those individuals were not part of the Muslim society and, therefore, they could not have a relationship of allegiance with it. Nevertheless, there is the bond of faith which, alone, does not provide for duties towards such individuals which the Quranic society is bound to fulfill. However, in the case where these individuals suffer aggression or an attempt to turn them away from their faith a provision in their favor is clearly stated. Should they in such a situation appeal to Muslims for support, the Quranic society must support them. The only proviso is that giving such support should not violate any provision of a treaty the Muslim society might have with another party, even though that party might be the aggressor.

What we have to understand here is that the first priority is given to what serves the interests of the Muslim community and its method of action with whatever contracts or transactions that this might produce. These have to be honored even in the case where aggression is made against believers who have not joined the Quran-based society which represents the practical existence of the Quranic message.

This shows the great importance the Quranic message attaches to its own active organization. The comment on this rule added at the end of the sign says: **(8:72)** Whatever human beings may do, God

is aware of all their actions. He knows the preliminaries, incentives, motivations, the deeds as well as their effects and consequences.

Thus, a society based on the Quranic message is an active and organic grouping where individuals are united by their loyalty, allegiance and mutual support of one another. The same characteristics apply to ignorant or *jahiliyyah* societies: **(8:73)** By nature, a *jahiliyyah* society does not act as mere individuals. It behaves like a living entity whose organs move by nature to defend its existence and independence. Therefore, the people in that society are, to all intents and purposes, friends and protectors of one another. Therefore, the Quranic message must confront them as a society which demonstrates the same characteristics to a stronger and firmer degree.

Should the Muslims refrain from confronting them as a community whose individuals are united by mutual ties of loyalty and friendship, these Muslims would be subject to persecution by the *jahiliyyah* society. They would not be able to resist that society since it moves against them as an integrated whole. Thus, *jahiliyyah* would gain the upper hand against the Quranic message, sovereignty would be given to human beings and people would be forced to submit themselves to other people. All this leads to much persecution and the worst type of corruption. **(8:73)**

This is a very serious warning. Muslims who do not establish their existence on the solid foundation of an active organization bound by a single loyalty and working under a single leadership shall have to answer to God for all the oppression and the corruption that results from their actions, in addition to what they suffer in their own lives as a result.

### TRUE BELIEVERS

Once more, the Chapter states the true nature of faith: **(8:74)** This is the true picture reflecting true faith. This sign tells us exactly how the Quranic message gains its real existence. The Quranic message does not become a reality with a declaration of its theoretical basis, or its adoption as a conceptual belief, or even with offering its worship rituals. The code of living based on the Quranic message needs an active organization to implement it and put it into practice. When it remains in the form of beliefs only, its existence remains abstract. It does not become a true and practical existence without such an active organization dedicated to its implementation.

Those who belong to such an active organization are the true believers who are promised forgiveness and generous provisions. The provisions are mentioned here in relation to their striving, sacrificing their wealth, supporting their brethren and giving them shelter, with

all the costs they bear in meeting these responsibilities. But in addition to such generous provisions, they are given forgiveness of sins, which counts as t best type of God's bounty.

Grouped with the first Muslim community of the Emigrants and the Helpers are all those who later migrate and strive for God's cause, but the first community had its degree of excellence, as stated in other Quranic signs. The addition is stated here to make it clear that these also belong to the Muslim community, and give it their allegiance. **(8:75)**

The requirement of migration continued to apply until Makkah had fallen to the Quranic message. At that time, the whole of Arabia acknowledged leadership based on the Quranic message and its entire population formed the Quranic community. The Messenger made it clear then that the requirement of migration was no longer operative, but people were required to work for the Quranic message and strive hard in serving its cause. That was in the first round of Quranic triumph which ushered in a period of rule through the Quranic message that continued for nearly twelve centuries. Throughout that period, Quranic law was implemented and the Muslim leadership acknowledged God's sovereignty and fulfilled its obligations under Quranic law.

The first period of building the Quranic message had its own provisional laws and special duties. Loyalty on the basis of faith replaced blood and family relations in all shapes and forms, as well a rights and duties, including inheritance and mutual support in th payment of penalties and compensation for accidental killing. Whe the structure of Quranic society became well established after the resounding victory at Badr, the provisional laws applicable to that special period of construction were amended. The amendments re-established inheritance and mutual support in financial liabilities on the basis of family relationships, but only within the Muslim community in the land of Islam: **(8:75)**

To give priority in such matters to family and relatives, within the general framework of the Muslim community, after the practical existence of the Quranic message has been firmly established meets a certain need of human nature. There is no harm in satisfying people's natural feelings as long as there is no conflict between such satisfaction and the fulfilment of Quranic duties. The Quranic message does not negate or obliterate natural feelings, but it controls them so that they work in line with the more important requirements of its own existence as a faith. Thus, the satisfaction of people's natural needs and feelings is provided within the general framework of Islam and its requirements. This means that some special periods may have

special provisions which are not included among the final provisions of Islamic law which are applicable in a well-established and secure Islamic community. This is how we must understand the requirements of the initial building stage as well as the general nature of Islam and its laws. This is the appropriate comment on all these laws and regulations and how they interact and are coordinated. They have their basis in God's knowledge which is flawless, perfect and absolute. **(8:75)**

### A COMMUNITY OF HUMANITY

This Quranic approach making faith the basic social tie in a Quranic society has produced remarkable results. Instead of stressing those traits which are common to both the human being and animal, the Quranic approach promotes and nurtures the human being's human qualities so that they become the dominant factors. The concrete remarkable result of this attitude was that the Quranic society became an open and all-inclusive community in which people of various races, nations, languages and colors were members. No obstacle prevented them from forming a coherent and open society. The rivers of higher talents and various abilities of all races of humanity flowed together into this vast ocean and worked in perfect harmony. Such a coherent mix gave rise to a high level of civilization in a very short period of time. It harnessed the capabilities, ideas and wisdom of all those peoples to produce a great civilization, in spite of the fact that in those times, travel was difficult and the means of communication were slow.

In this unique Quranic society Arabs, Persians, Syrians, Egyptians, Moroccans, Turks, Chinese, Indians, Romans, Greeks, Indonesians, Africans and people of other nations and races were gathered together. Their various characteristics were united, and with mutual cooperation, harmony and unity they took part in the construction of the Islamic community and the Quranic culture. This marvellous civilization was not an Arab civilization but a Quranic one. At no time did it acquire a nationalistic guise, but was instead always based on faith.

All these peoples came together on an equal footing in a relationship of love, with their minds set on a single goal. They used their best abilities, developed the qualities of their races to the fullest, and brought the essence of their personal, national and historical experiences for the development of this united community, to which they all belonged as equal members and in which their common bond was through their relationship with their Lord. In this community their 'humanity' developed without any hindrance. Such character-

istics were never witnessed in any other community in the entire history of humanity.

The Quranic message, then, is the only divine way of life which brings out the noblest human characteristics, developing and using them for the construction of human society. In this respect, the Quranic message has always remained unique. Those who opt for any other system, whether based on nationalism, color and race, or on class struggle, or similar corrupt theories, are truly enemies of humanity. They are the ones who do not want man to develop those noble characteristics which have been given to him by his Creator. Nor do they wish to see a human society benefit from the harmonious blending of all those capabilities, experiences and characteristics which have been developed among the various races of humanity. Such people swim against the current and try to reverse the tide of human development. They wish human society to be based on the same factors which group animals together: a stable and a grazing land. They are not happy with that sublime level to which God has raised man and which provides a fitting basis for uniting human society.

But God will most certainly accomplish His purpose. This type of reversal into *jahiliyyah*, or ignorance, and its animal values will not survive for ever in human life. God's will is certain to prevail. Humanity will try one day to establish its society on the basis by which God has honored the human being and which provided the foundation of the first society based on the Quranic message that attained a highly distinctive position in human history. The image of that society will continue to loom large on the horizon and humanity will aspire to attain the same high level which it had experienced at a particular stage in history.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?

Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

## APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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LABIB BAKKAR

# CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

## THE YEAR 16 OF THE REVELATION (3 AH/624-625 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 16*

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 16

## of the Revelation (3 AH/624-625 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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## ca. June 24, 624 CE-June 12, 625 CE

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## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 16*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 3 AH/ca. June 24, 624 CE-June 12, 625 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun you in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

## CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts**, ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions**, solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

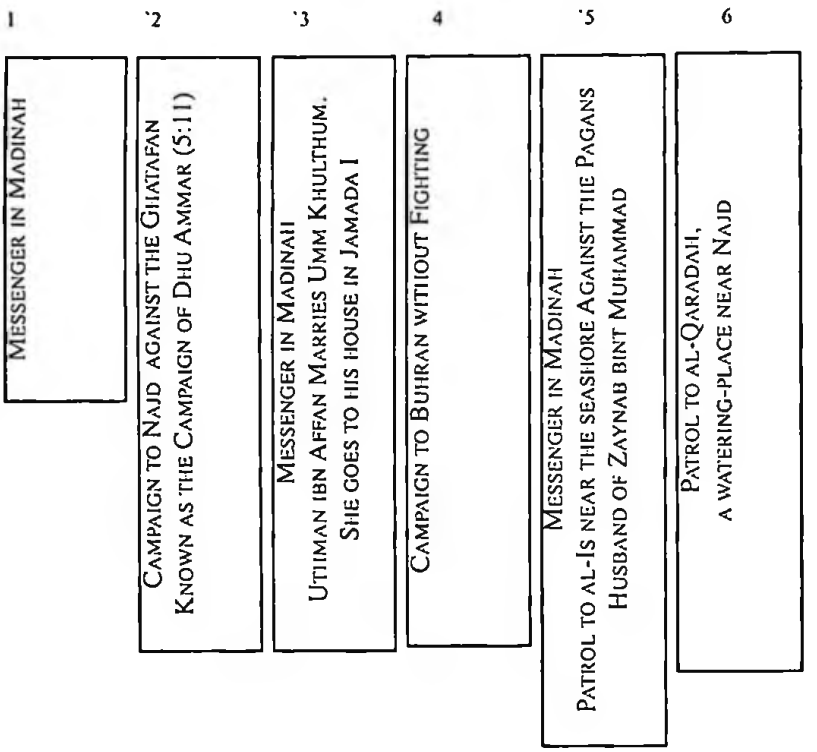
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# Preview *Book Year 16*

## Timeline

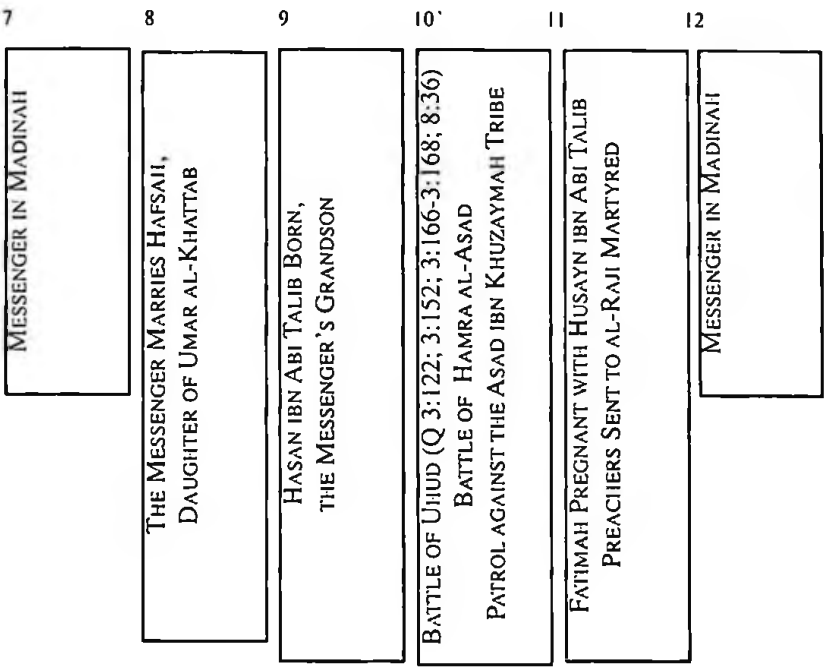



**Key**
1 = Muharram
2 = Safar
3 = Rabi I
4 = Rabi II
5 = Jamada I
6 = Jamada II

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands
a Companion to Lead

# Preview *Book Year 16*

## Timeline




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 16* presented here begins with Lesson 89 and Quranic Chapter 3, the 89th Chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 33, 60 and, finally, Lesson 92, Quranic Chapter 4.

# PRELUDE

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I IMRAN)

The Quran is the Book of Islam. It is the soul and *raison d'être* of the Islamic mission. It is the backbone and edifice of its existence. It is its guardian and protector; its expression and manifestation; its constitution and way of life. Once all is said and done, the Quran is the fountain, and the reference point, from which Muslims draw the ways and means of their actions, their systems and approach, and the provisions for their journey in this life.

The Quran is a reality with a perpetual existence akin to that of the cosmos itself; the cosmos being God's visual Book while the Quran is God's recited Book. Each is a testimony and a witness to the Creator, and a force in the world. The universe continues to move and fulfil the functions ordained for it by its Creator: the sun moves in its orbit and performs its role, as do the moon, the earth and all the stars and planets, unhindered by the passing of time or the changes affecting their role in the universe. Similarly, the Quran has fulfilled its role towards humanity, and continues to exist in its original form. Likewise, as far as his true character and original nature are concerned, the human being has not changed.

The Quran is God's message to the human being. It is immutable because, despite the changes that may have taken place around him and despite the mutual effect between him and those changes, the Quran addresses the basic being and his original nature which have remained the same. It is capable of guiding human life today and in the future because it is destined so to do. That is because it is God's last and final message and because human nature, like that of the physical universe, is constant and dynamic but never changing.

Would it not be laughable if the sun, for instance, were described as old or reactionary and therefore it should be replaced by a new and more progressive star? Similarly, is it not also laughable for the human being to be considered antiquated and reactionary and his replacement by some other more enlightened being to rule the world be argued for? It would also be ludicrous to say the same with regard to the Quran, God's last and final message to humanity.

The Chapter under examination here covers a lively period in the history of the Muslims in Madinah, extending from the end of the famous Battle of Badr, in the second year of Hijrah (623 CE), to the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, a year later. It describes the circumstances and the atmosphere surrounding the events of that period, the impact of the Quran on the life of that community, and how it interacted with the prevailing conditions, across all walks of life.

The force and vitality of the Quranic text brings into sharp focus the images of that period, the life of the community, and the interactions and circumstances in which that life was engulfed. It penetrates deep into the Muslims' consciences, exploring their innermost thoughts, feelings and sen-

sibilities; so much so that the reader feels those events in the same way that members of that community experienced them. If one closes one's eyes, one may begin to see—as I have seen—those Muslims going about their daily lives, here and there, with their smiling faces and serenity, but with enemies lurking all around.

Those enemies were conspiring, spreading lies and suspicion, harboring grudges, and rallying their forces for combat with the Muslims, for them to be defeated initially at Uhud, but later to re-group and inflict heavy losses upon the Muslims. One can picture every movement and every action that took place on the battlefield, and every inner or outward emotion and reaction that accompanied it. One can see the Quran being revealed to counteract the conspiracy and the intrigue, to refute the lies and the allegations, to strengthen Muslim morale and bolster the Muslim position, to direct Muslim spirit and thoughts, to comment on events and actions and draw appropriate lessons, to establish and clarify concepts, to alert the Muslims to the treachery and deceit of their scheming enemies, and to provide them with an enlightened and judicious lead through the thorns, nettles and traps laid in their path.

Beyond that, the directives and exhortations contained in this Chapter remain eternal and universal, not restricted by time, place, or circumstance. The Chapter addresses the human soul and the Muslim community—today and in the future—and the whole of humanity, as though it is being revealed at this very moment. It deals with contemporary issues and current situations, because it deals with emotional and spiritual issues, events and feelings as though these were already taken into account within the context of the Chapter. Indeed, they would have been taken into account in the overall scheme of God, the omniscient, who has full knowledge of everything.

Thus, it becomes clear that the Quran is the guiding light everywhere and at all times. It is the life code for every generation of Muslims whoever they may be, and their beacon along the way, century after century. For, it is God's last and final message to humanity in all ages.

## The Early Years in Madinah

At the time of the revelation of this Chapter, the Muslim community began to settle in their new homeland, Madinah, the city of the Prophet Muhammad.

The Battle of Badr had already taken place, and the Muslims had been blessed with victory over the Quraysh. The circumstances concomitant with achieving that victory suggested a miracle. This forced notable figures such as Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, a grand personality of the Khazraj tribe of Madinah, to suppress his pride, put aside his hatred for the Quranic message, and contain his spite and envy towards the Prophet Muhammad in order to assimilate into the Muslim community, albeit hypocritically. His only comment was: This is here to stay. He had come to accept that the Quranic message was firmly es-

tablished and its progress unstoppable.

This was how the seeds of the phenomenon known as hypocrisy were planted in Madinah, and which began to grow and spread. Before Badr, some people whose relatives had believed in the Quranic message were obliged to pretend not to mind; some of the more prominent of these even pretended to have accepted the Quranic message and joined the Muslim community while, at the same time, they continued to harbor a grudge and animosity. They were ready to scheme against the Muslims and to seek the weaker points in the structure of the new community in order to undermine Muslim ranks and strength, satisfy their own prejudices and await the appropriate moment to strike their final blow, if possible.

The hypocrites found natural allies among the Jews of Madinah who had a similar or even stronger grudge and prejudices of their own towards the Quranic message and the Prophet. The Quranic message had posed a real and formidable threat to the status of the Jews among the Arabs of Madinah. It deprived them of the one reason they had to cause rancor and division between the two main Arab tribes of Madinah: the Aws and the Khazraj. Under the Quranic message people of the two tribes became brothers and sisters, belonging to the same united side.

The Jews of Madinah were stifled and choked at the Muslim victory at Badr. From then on, they would use all their powers of intrigue, deceit and scheming to break Muslim ranks and throw doubt and confusion into Muslim hearts and minds; spreading rumors and allegations against the Quranic message and against the Muslims personally.

Then came that episode with the Jewish tribe of Qaynuq bringing all that animosity into the open. This they did, despite the agreements and covenants the Prophet Muhammad had made with the Jews of Madinah following his arrival there in 622 CE.

On the other hand, in the wake of their defeat at Badr, the non-Muslim Arabs were growing increasingly bitter. They could no longer afford to ignore Muhammad's achievements or those of the Madinah camp; nor could they underestimate the threat posed to their trade, their status and their very existence in Arabia. They were, therefore, keen to eliminate that imminent threat before it was beyond their capacity to do so.

As the hatred and power of the enemies of the Quranic message were reaching their peak, the Muslim camp in Madinah was still in its infancy. It was hardly a homogeneous community; there were the elites of the earlier Muslims of Makkah (the Emigrants) and Madinah (the Helpers) as well as individuals who were yet to mature. The community as a whole lacked any practical experience to be able to smooth away the rough edges in its composition and to present a clear image of the Quranic message and the phase it was going through, or to express the sum and substance of its approach and obligations.

The hypocrites, headed by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, commanded a strong

position in society. They maintained strong family and tribal ties. The Muslims, on the other hand, were yet to develop the understanding that the Quranic message alone represented their family and tribal relationships and the only bond that united them. A certain amount of dislocation could still be found within Muslim ranks due to the existence of hypocrite and dishonest elements and their influence on the destiny and future of the whole community, as we will see clearly when we come to review the signs in this Chapter relating to the Battle of Uhud.

The total and decisive victory of the Muslims at Badr, however, was achieved with minimum effort and cost. The small band of Muslims who joined that expedition were scantily equipped for armed conflict. Although they confronted a much larger and well- prepared Quraysh battalion, the latter were overcome swiftly and convincingly.

That victory, coming in the very first confrontation between the army of God and that of the ingrateful, was part of God's scheme of things, and we may be able to discern some of its underlying purpose today. Perhaps it was designed to reinforce and strengthen the fledgling religion, or to demonstrate its efficacy in the battlefield so that it could proceed and progress thereafter.

The Muslims, themselves, might have taken their victory for granted and considered that they would prevail at every stage of their ascent. After all, were they not believing Muslims and their enemies ungrateful? Was it not the case, then, that whenever the two camps met in battle, the Muslims would be certain of triumph.

The divine principles governing victory and defeat are not so simplistic or naive. There are prerequisites pertaining to mental preparation, organizational readiness, equipment and provisions, discipline and control, as well as mental and physical alertness. This is what God meant to teach them through the setback they suffered at Uhud, as this Chapter portrays in vivid, breathtaking and meaningful terms. It identifies the behavior of some Muslims as the reason for their defeat and delivers constructive lessons for both individuals and the community as a whole.

## Lesson 89(1). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Trait Empathetic Altruism

### What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:1-3:9

**Madinah:** *Alif Lam Mim.* ((3:1)
*God! There is no god but He, The Living, The Eternal.* (3:2)
*He sent down to you the Book with The Truth,*
*that which establishes as true what was before it.*
*And He caused to descend the Torah and the Gospel* (3:3)
*before this as a guidance for humanity.*
*And He caused to descend the Criterion between right and wrong.*
*Truly, those who were ungrateful for the signs of God,*
*for them is a severe punishment.*
*And God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (3:4)
*Truly, God, nothing is hidden from Him*

*in or on the earth nor in heaven.* (3:5)
*It is He Who forms you in the wombs how He wills.*
*There is no god but He, Almighty, Wise.* (3:6)
*It is He who caused the Book to descend to you.*
*In it are signs, ones that are definitive.*
*They are the essence of the Book and others,*
*ones that are unspecific.*
*Then, those whose hearts are swerving,*
*they follow what was unspecific in it, looking for dissent*
*and looking for an interpretation,*
*but none knows its interpretation but God.*
*And the ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge say:*
*We believed in it as all is from our Lord.*
*And none recollects, but those imbued with intuition.* (3:7)
*Our Lord! Cause our hearts not to swerve after You had guided us.*
*And bestow on us mercy from that which proceeds*
*from Your Presence. Truly, You, You alone are The Giver.* (3:8)
*Our Lord! Truly, You are One Who Gathers humanity on a Day*
*in which there is no doubt in it.*
*Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration.* (3:9)

### COMMENTARY°

The opening signs of Chapter 3, emphasizes the parting of the ways between the principle of God's absolute Oneness and that of falsehood and distortion. It delivers a warning to those who reject the Quran and God's revelations it contains. All such people are branded as ungrateful, even though they may profess to be Christian or Jewish. It describes the Muslims' attitude towards their Lord and their reactions to His revelations in a manner that makes the situation crystal clear. This it does by defining in no uncertain terms the true meanings of belief and ingratitude.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?

Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

## LESSON 89(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BEING FAIR AND JUST (NOT SELF-SERVING, EGO-CENTRIC)

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:11-3:20

**Madinah:** *Truly, those who were ungrateful,*
*it will not avail them—neither their wealth nor their children—*
*against God at all.*
*And those, they will be fuel for the fire,* (3:10)
*in like manner of the people of Pharaoh*
*and those who were before them.*
*They denied Our signs so God took them because of their impiety.*
*And God is Severe in repayment.* (3:11)
*Say to those who were ungrateful:*
*You will be vanquished and you will be assembled into hell.*
*It will be a miserable Final Place.* (3:12)
*Surely, there had been a sign for you in the two factions who met one another—one faction fights in the way of God and the other as ones who are ungrateful, whom they see twice the like of visibly in their eyes. And God confirms with His help whom He wills.*
*Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight.* (3:13)
*Made to appear pleasing to humanity was the cherishing of lust:*
*From women and children and that which is heaped up heaps of gold and silver and horses, ones that are distinguished,*
*and flocks and cultivation, that is the enjoyment of this present life,*
*while God, with Him is the goodness of the Destination.* (3:14)
*Say: Shall I tell you of better than that?*
*For those who were God-conscious, with their Lord are Gardens beneath which rivers run. They are ones who will dwell in them forever with purified spouses and contentment from God.*
*And God is Seeing His servants,* (3:15)
*those who say: Our Lord! Truly, we believed, so forgive us our impieties and protect us from the punishment of the fire:* (3:16)
*They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness)*
*at the breaking of day.* (3:17)
*God bore witness that there is no god but He, as do the angels and those imbued with the knowledge, the ones who uphold equity.*
*There is no god but He, The Almighty, The Wise.* (3:18)
*Truly the way of life with God is submission to the One God.*
*And at variance were those who were given the Book after what drew near them of the knowledge out of insolence among themselves. And whoever is ungrateful for the signs of God,*
*then, truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* (3:19)
*So if they argued with* **you**, *then say: I submitted my face to God as*

*have those who followed me. And say to those who were given the Book and to the unlettered: Have you submitted to God? If they submitted to God, then, surely, they were truly guided. And if they turned away, then, on you is only delivering the message.) And God is Seeing of His servants.* (3:20)

### COMMENTARY°

In this passage, the chapter uncovers the reality of those who swerve from the truth. These people turn their back on the facts stated with absolute clarity in the Quran, pursuing other Quranic statements which admit more than one explanation in order to use the same as a basis for their fabrications. It also shows the distinctive characteristics of those who truly believe in God and submit to Him, accepting everything they receive from Him without any doubt or argument.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.

I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.

I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view.

## LESSON 89(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE PERSPECTIVE

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

### HOW IS POINT OF VIEW DEFINED?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:21-3:30

**Madinah:** *Truly, those who are ungrateful for the signs of God and kill the Prophets without right and kill those who command to equity from among humanity, then, give you to them the good tidings of a painful punishment.* (3:21)

*Those, those are they whose actions were fruitless in the present and the world to come.*

*And for them there is no one who helps.* (3:22)
*Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They are called to the Book of God to give judgment between them. Again, a group of people among them turn away and they, they are ones who turn aside.* (3:23)
*That is because they said: The fire will not touch us but for numbered days. And they were deluded in their way of life by what they had been devising.* (3:24)
*How then will it be when We gathered them on a Day, there is no doubt in it? The account of every soul will be paid in full for what it earned and they, they will not be wronged?* (3:25)
*Say: O God! The One Who is Sovereign of Dominion, **You** have given dominion to whom **You** have willed, and **You** have torn away dominion from whom **You** have willed. **You** have rendered powerful whom **You** have willed, and **You** have abased whom **You** have willed. In **Your** hand is the good.*
*Truly, **You** are Powerful over everything.* (3:26)
***You** have caused the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime. And **You** have caused the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime. And **You** have brought out the living from the dead. And **You** have brought out the dead from the living.*
***You** have provided to whomever **You** have willed without stinting.* (3:27)
*Let not the ones who believe take to themselves the ones who are ungrateful for protectors instead of the ones who believe. And whoever accomplishes that is not with God in anything, unless it is because you are God-conscious that you are being cautious towards them.*
*And God cautions you of Himself.*
*And to God is the Homecoming.* (3:28)
*Say: Whether you conceal what is in your breasts or show it, God knows it and He knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (3:29)
*A Day when every soul will find that which is brought forward of good and what it did of evil. It will wish that there be between this and between that a long space of time.*
*God cautions you of Himself.*
*And God is Gentle to the servants.* (3:30)

## COMMENTARY°

Those who deny God's revelations, and slay the Prophets against

all right and slay people who enjoin equity among all people: promise them a painful suffering. It is they whose works shall come to nothing in this world and in the life to come; and they shall have none to help them.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran says that God sends down the Remembrance and guards it. What is the Remembrance? God has sent down the signs of the Book and of a clear Recitation (Quran). The Remembrance is the Quranic message. God sent Remembrances before with various Messengers who were also ridiculed. Do not be disheartened, Muhammad. Know that God guards the Remembrance. The Remembrance is guarded by God. The ungrateful will be punished because of their denial of the Remembrance and their claim that the Prophet is possessed. That on that Day the ungrateful will wish that they had been among the ones who submit (*muslim*).

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Remember what you said about these people before we studied them?
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way? Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

## Lesson 89(4). Critical Thinking Strategy

### Thinking Independently

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)

### Signs 3:31-3:41

**Madinah:** *Say: If you had been loving God, then, follow me. And God will love you and forgive you your impieties. God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (3:31)

*Say: Obey God and the Messenger. Then, if they turned away, then, truly, God loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:32)

*Truly, God favored Adam and Noah and the people of Abraham and the people of Imran above all the worlds,* (3:33)
*some of one another's offspring.*
*And God is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (3:34)

**Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran, Mother of Mary (3:35)**

**Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran, Mother of Mary (3:36)**

**Madinah: Book 28: The Wife of Imran; Zechariah (3:37)**

**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:38)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:39)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:40 )**
**Madinah: Book 28: Zechariah (3:41)**

### Commentary°

The whole passage ends on a high note stating in absolute clarity the final verdict on the whole issue which is central to the chapter. In just a few words, the essence of faith and submission are stated in such a way which admits of no confusion whatsoever between faith and unfaith:. (3:31-3:32) True love of God is not a mere verbal claim or a spiritual passion. The claim and the passion must be confirmed with a conscious following of God's Messenger and implementation of the divine way of life. To be a true believer is not to repeat certain words or to experience certain feelings or to observe certain rituals. True faith is total obedience to God and His Messenger and a conscious implementation of the constitution conveyed to us through God's Messenger.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a known measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).
I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)
I was able to ask questions.
I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.
By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:42-3:54

**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:42)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:43)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:44)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:45)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:46)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:47)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:48)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:49)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:50)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:51)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:52)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:53)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:54)**

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:55-3:63

**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:55)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:56)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:57)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:58)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:59)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:60)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:61)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:62)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Mary the Mother of Jesus (3:63)**

## LESSON 89(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says: If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:64-3:71

**Madinah:** *Say: O People of the Book! Approach now*
*to a word common between us and between you*
*that we worship none but God and ascribe nothing as partners*
*with Him, that none of us take others to ourselves as lords besides*
*God. And if they turned away, then, say:*
*Bear witness that we are ones who submit to God.* (3:64)
*O People of the Book! Why argue with one another about Abraham*
*while neither was the Torah caused to descend nor the Gospel*
*until after him. Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (3:65)
*Lo, behold! You are these who argued with one another about what*
*you have some knowledge. Why, then, argue with one another*
*about what is with you when you have no knowledge?*
*And God knows and you know not.* (3:66)
*Abraham had been neither a Jew nor a Christian,*
*but he had been a monotheist, one who submits to God.*
*He had not been of the ones who were idol worshippers.* (3:67 )
*Truly, of humanity closest to Abraham are those who followed him*

*and this Prophet and those who believed.*
*And God is Protector of the ones who believe.* (3:68)
*A section of the People of the Book wished*
*that they cause you to go astray.*
*And they cause none to go astray, but themselves,*
*and they are not aware.* (3:69)
*O People of the Book! Why be ungrateful for the signs of God*
*while you bear witness?* (3:70)
*O People of the Book! Why confuse you The Truth with falsehood,*
*and keep back The Truth while you know?* (3:71)

### COMMENTARY°

This part of the chapter takes up the same general theme of the controversy surrounding religious beliefs between the people of earlier revelations, i.e. the Jews and Christians, and the Muslims. It explores the relentless and devious efforts lined up against the Quranic message; the scheming, smears, slandering, vilification, lies and devilish intrigues of its opponents. It presents the Quran's argument on behalf of the Muslims and reassures them of the truth of their cause and exposes the deviation and hopelessness of their detractors. It openly and closely probes the habits, ethics, intentions and activities of those enemies in order to make the Muslims fully aware of the threat they pose and to take away the mantle of knowledge and wisdom those enemies had assumed. It moves to dissipate any trust some gullible Muslims may have placed in them. It discourages following their example, and eliminates the dangers of their intrigue by exposing it so that no one may be deceived or misled by it.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

## Lesson 89(6). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Developing Intellectual Curiosity

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)
## Signs 3:72-3:80

**Madinah:** *And a section of the People of the Book said:*
*Believe in what was caused to descend to those who believed*
*at the beginning of the daytime. Disbelieve at the last of the day*
*so that perhaps they will return to disbelief.* (3:72)
*And believe none, but one who heeded your way of life.*
*Say: Truly guidance is The Guidance from God and believe not*
*that anyone be given the like of what you were given,*
*so that he argue with you before your Lord.*
*Say: Truly, the grace is in the hand of God.*
*He gives it to whomever He wills.*
*And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (3:73)
*He singles out for His mercy whom He wills.*
*And God is Possessor of Sublime Grace.* (3:74)
*And among the People of the Book is he who, if you have entrusted*
*him with a hundredweight, he would give it back to you.*
*And among them is he who, if you have entrusted him with a dinar,*
*he would not give it back to you unless you had continued as one*
*who stands over him. That is because they said: There is no way of*
*moral duty on us as to the unlettered.*
*And they are lying against God while they, they know.* (3:75)
*Yea! Whoever lived up to his compact and was God-conscious*
*then, truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* (3:76)
*Truly, those who exchange the compact of God and their sworn*
*oaths for a little price, those, there is no apportionment for them in*
*the world to come. And God will neither speak to them, nor look on*
*them on the Day of Resurrection nor will He make them pure.*

*And for them is a painful punishment.* (3:77)
*And, truly, among them is a group of people who distort their tongues with the Book so that you assume it is from the Book, although it is not from the Book.*
*And they say: It is from God, although it is not from God.*
*And they say a lie against God while they know.* (3:78)
*It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again, he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God! Rather, he would say: Be you masters, because you had been teaching the Book and because you had been studying it.* (3:79)
*Nor would He command you to take to yourselves the angels and the Prophets as lords. Would He command you to ingratitude after you are ones who submit to God?* (3:80)

## Commentary°

The chapter then reveals aspects and manifestations of that evil intrigue. The culprits declare adherence to the Quranic message in the morning but reject it before the day is out in order to feed uncertainty and suspicion in the hearts of weaker Muslims who are found among all communities. Surely, there must be a valid reason why Jewish and Christian individuals, whose people had a much longer association with, and experience of, prophets and Divine revelations, rejected the Quranic message.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?

8. What is its **Point of View?**

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

## LESSON 89(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:81-3:91

**Madinah:** *And mention when God took a solemn promise*
*from the Prophets: Whatever I gave you of the Book and wisdom,*
*again, if a Messenger drew near you with that which establishes*
*as true what is with you, you will believe in him*
*and you will help him. He said: Are you in accord?*
*And will you take on My severe test? They said: We are in accord.*
*He said: Then, bear witness*
*and I am with you among the ones who bear witness.* (3:81)
*Then, whoever turned away after this, then, those,*
*they are the ones who disobey.* (3:82)
*Desire they other than the way of life of God*
*while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth*
*willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)
*Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us and*
*what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac*
*and Jacob and the Tribes and what was given to Moses and Jesus*
*and the Prophets from their Lord. We separate and divide not*
*between anyone of them*
*and we are ones who submit to Him.* (3:84)
*And whoever be looking for a way of life*
*other than submission to God, it will never be accepted from him.*
*And he, in the world to come,*
*will be among the ones who are losers.* (3:85)
*How will God guide a folk who disbelieved after their belief?*
*And they bore witness to The Truth of the Messenger*
*after the clear portents drew near them.*
*And God guides not the unjust folk.* (3:86)
*Those, their recompense is that the curse of God is on them*

*and of the angels and of humanity, one and all,* (3:87)
*ones who will dwell with it forever. Neither will the punishment be*
*lightened from them, nor will they be given respite.* (3:88)
*But those who repented after that and made things right,*
*then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (3:89)
*Truly, those who disbelieved after their belief, again,*
*added to their disbelief. Their remorse will never be accepted.*
*Those, they are the ones who go astray.* (3:90)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and died*
*when they were ones who are ungrateful, it will not be accepted*
*from anyone of them the earth full of gold,*
*even if he offered it as ransom.*
*Those, for them, is a painful punishment,*
*and for them there is no one who helps.* (3:91)

## COMMENTARY°

It says: Do they seek a religion other than God's, when every soul in the heavens and the earth has submitted to Him, willingly or by compulsion, and to Him they shall all return? With that on-going covenant in the background, the chapter asserts that anyone seeking a religion other than that reveled in the Quranic message, or complete surrender to God, would be breaking away from the whole grand and universal order God has ordained for all creation. Those who choose not to surrender totally to God or humbly and freely comply with His order of life, appear abnormal and out of place in this majestic world design. At this point, the chapter turns to direct the Prophet Muhammad and the Muslims to declare their unshakeable faith in the One God, as set out in what was revealed to all prophets, as the only religious belief sanctioned by God Almighty. It says: He who seeks a religion other than self-surrender to God, it will not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he will be among the lost. Those who reject God's religion, however, have no prospect of either being guided by God or being spared His punishment unless they heed and repent. As for those who leave this world without believing in God, nothing they may have done will save them, even if they were to give the earth's weight in gold. The chapter goes on to urge the Muslims to give those possessions closest to their hearts to good causes, as an investment with God to be collected in the hereafter. It says: You will never attain to true piety unless you spend on others out of what you dearly cherish. God has full knowledge of what you spend. Thus, in one relatively short passage, this chapter packs an impressive and important host of issues, facts and directives.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

## LESSON 89(8). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
## SIGNS 3:92-3:101

**Madinah:** *You will never attain virtuous conduct*
*until you spend of what you love.*
*And whatever thing you spend, truly,*
*God is Knowing of it.* (3:92)
*All food had been allowed to the Children of Jacob,*
*but what Jacob (Israel) forbade to himself*
*before the Torah is sent down.*
*Say: Then, approach with the Torah and recount it*
*if you had been ones who are sincere.* (3:93)
*Then, whoever devised lies against God after that*
*then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (3:94)
*Say: God was Sincere, so follow the creed of Abraham*
*—a monotheist—and not had he been*
*among the ones who are polytheists.* (3:95)
*Truly, the first House set in place for humanity was that which is at*
*Bekka, that which is blessed, and a guidance for the worlds.* (3:96)
*In it are clear portents, signs, the Station of Abraham.*
*And whoever entered it had been one who is safe.*
*And to God is a duty on humanity of pilgrimage to the House in*
*Makkah for whoever was able to travel the way to it.*
*And whoever was ungrateful,*
*then truly God is Independent of the worlds.* (3:97)
*Say: O People of the Book!*
*Why be ungrateful for the signs of God?*
*And God is Witness over what you do.* (3:98)
*Say: O People of the Book!*
*Why bar he who believed from the way of God,*
*desiring crookedness when you are witnesses?*
*God is not One Who is Heedless of what you do.* (3:99)
*O those who believed! If you obey a group of people of those who*

*were given the Book, they will repel you after your belief*
*turning you into ones who are ungrateful.* (3:100)
*And how would you be ungrateful when the signs of God*
*are recounted to you, and His Messenger is among you?*
*And whoever cleaves firmly to God was,*
*then, surely guided to a straight path.* (3:101)

### COMMENTARY°

In this passage we witness the culmination of the debate with the people of earlier revelations. Although the concepts outlined here do not form part of the debate with the Najran Christian delegation, they share a common theme and, thereby, complement and resonate with that debate. The passage addresses the Jews in particular, countering their intrigues and scheming against the Muslims of Madinah, and leads to a complete and total break between the two camps. Further on, it directs its attention fully to the Muslim community, pointing out their true identity, their way of life and their obligations. This section opens by the affirmation that the Children of Jacob were permitted to eat all types of food with the exception of what Jacob had chosen to forbid himself and his people from eating before the Torah was revealed to Moses. This statement appears to come in reply to objections raised by the Children of Jacob against the Quran for making permissible certain foods that have been forbidden to them. The reality is, of course, that these were forbidden only to the Children of Jacob as punishment for their transgressions.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?

7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

## LESSON 89(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:102-3:109

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be God-conscious as it is His right that He be feared. And die not but that you be ones who submit to the One God.* (3:102)

*And cleave firmly to the rope of God altogether and be not split up. And remember the divine blessing of God on you when you had been enemies. Then, He brought your hearts together. You became brothers/sisters by His divine blessing. You had been on the brink of an abyss of the fire and He saved you from it. Thus, God makes manifest to you His signs so that perhaps you will be truly guided.* (3:103)

*And let there be a community from among you who calls to good and commands to that which is honorable and prohibits that which is unlawful. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (3:104)

*And be not like those who split up and were at variance after the*
*clear portents drew near them.*
*And those, for them is a tremendous punishment* (3:105)
*on a Day when faces will brighten and faces will cloud over.*
*As for those whose faces cloud over:*
*Disbelieve you after your belief?*
*Then experience the punishment*
*for what you had been ungrateful.* (3:106)
*And as for those whose faces brightened,*
*they are in the mercy of God.*
*They, ones who will dwell in it forever.* (3:107)
*These are the signs of God. We recount them to you in Truth.*
*And God wants not injustice in the worlds.* (3:108)
*And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*To God all commands are returned.* (3:109)

## COMMENTARY°

It goes on to condemn the people of earlier revelations for their denial of God's revelations, for turning people away from God's path, their refusal to comply with His commands, and for their propensity to deviation as a dominant feature of life when they are well aware of the truth. It turns to address the people of earlier revelations as a whole, as it warns the Muslims not to comply with their false beliefs. That was all the more urgent as the Quran was being revealed to them and God's Messenger, Muhammad, was teaching them and calling upon them to fear God and hold fast to Islam until they die and meet their Lord. It reminds them of God's grace which had kept their hearts close together and united them under the singular banner of Islam when they were besieged with schisms and strife. Islam took them back from the brink and prepared them to be the nation that would uphold all that is good and prevent all that is indecent and harmful, as part of their obligation to establish God's order on earth. They are warned not to succumb to the machinations of the people of earlier revelations or to allow themselves to be divided as those people were. That would only bring them frustration and destruction both in this life and in the life to come.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer questions, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

*When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

## LESSON 89(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:110-3:120

**Madinah:** *You had been the best community that was brought out*
*for humanity. You command to that which is honorable*
*and prohibit that which is unlawful and believe in God.*
*And if the People of the Book believed,*
*it would have been better for them.*
*Some of them are the ones who believe,*
*but most of them are the ones who disobey.* (3:110)
*They will never injure you but are an annoyance.*
*And if they fight you, they will turn their backs on you.*
*Again, they will not be helped.* (3:111)
*Abasement was stamped on them wherever they were come upon—*
*but those with a rope to God and a rope to humanity—*
*and they drew the burden of anger from God*
*and wretchedness was stamped on them.*
*That is because they had been ungrateful for the signs of God*
*and kill the Prophets without right.*

*That is because they rebelled*
*and had been exceeding the limits.* (3:112)
*They are not all the same.*
*Among the People of the Book is a community*
*of ones who are upstanding.*
*They recount the signs of God in the night watch of the night*
*and they, they prostrate themselves.* (3:113)
*They believe in God and the Last Day and they command that*
*which is honorable and prohibit that which is unlawful*
*and they compete with one another in good deeds.*
*Those are among the ones in accord with morality.* (3:114)
*And whatever of good they accomplish will never*
*go unappreciated. And God is Knowing*
*of the ones who are God-conscious.* (3:115)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful never will avail them their wealth*
*nor their children against God at all.*
*And those will be the Companions of the Fire.*
*They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (3:116 )
*The parable of what they spend in this present life*
*is like the parable of a freezing wind in it that lit on the cultivation*
*of the folk who did wrong themselves and caused it to perish.*
*And God did not wrong them,*
*but they do wrong themselves.* (3:117)
*O those who believed! Take not to yourselves*
*as close friends other than yourselves.*
*They stop at nothing to ruin you.*
*They wished that misfortune would fall on you.*
*Surely, their hatred showed itself from their mouths*
*and what their breasts conceal is greater.*
*Surely, We made manifest to you*
*the signs if you had been reasonable.* (3:118)
*Lo, behold! You are those imbued with love for them,*
*but they love you not. And you believed in the Book, all of it.*
*And when they met you, they said: We believe.*
*But when they went privately,*
*they bit the tips of their fingers at you in rage.*
*Say: Die in your rage.*
*Truly God is Knowing of what is within the breasts.* (3:119)
*If benevolence touches you, it raises anger in them,*
*but if an evil deed lights on you, they are glad about it.*
*But if you endure patiently and are God-conscious*
*their cunning will not injure you at all.*
*Truly, God is One Who Encloses what they do.* (3:120)

## COMMENTARY°

These signs describe the Muslim nation so that it becomes aware of its position, value and true nature. The first part of the sign imposes a very heavy duty on the Muslim community, while at the same time honoring and elevating it to a position which cannot be given to any other community: You are the best community that has ever been raised for humanity; you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong, and you believe in God.

We note first that the reference to the Muslim community as one which has been raised is made in the passive voice. This suggests that a highly skilful hand has neatly molded this community and brought it forth from behind the eternal curtain which covers things known only to God. The expression adopted here indicates a subtle and gentle movement which brings forth onto the stage of existence a whole nation which has a unique role to play and a special position to occupy. You are the best community that has ever been raised for humanity. The Muslim nation should understand this in order to know its position and its true nature. It should know that it has been raised specially for the purpose of assuming the leadership of humanity, since it is the best nation.

God wants the leadership in this planet of ours to be assumed by the forces of goodness, not the forces of evil. It follows that it should never be in the recipient position, taking what other nations have to offer. It must be the one to offer to others whatever it has of sound ideology, philosophy, morality and knowledge, and of course its perfect system. This is the duty of the Muslim nation, imposed on it by its unique position and the purpose of its very existence. It is a duty on the Muslim nation to assume the leadership of humanity at all times. By assuming it, it also takes upon itself certain responsibilities.

Leadership cannot be given to any nation which claims it, unless it proves that it is the worthy leader. By its ideology and social system, the Muslim community is worthy of this position. It is clear then that the system which brings this nation into existence demands much from it and gives it the incentive to excel in every field, if only it would follow this system and appreciate its requirements and duties.

The first requirement is that the Muslim nation should work hard at protecting human life from evil. It must have the power to enable it to enjoin the doing of all that is right and forbid the doing of all that is wrong. It is, after all, the best nation ever raised for humanity. This position is not given to the Muslim community as the result of any favoritism, coincidence or random selection. Far be it from God to do that. Positions and duties are not given by God to different na-

tions on the basis of any favoritism.

The criterion which makes a certain community worthy of the position of leadership is its active work for the preservation of human life from evil and the promotion of what is right, in addition to its implementation of the faith which defines what is right and what is wrong: You enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid what is wrong.

The position of leadership is thus earned through the active fulfilment of its tasks, heavy as they are, and through following the way defined for it, thorny as it may be. In practical terms, it means standing up against evil, promoting every good and protecting society against all elements of corruption. All these are extremely hard tasks, but they are nevertheless necessary if a good human society is to be established and protected. There is no other way to bring about the type of society which God loves.

Belief in God is also necessary so that the community has a correct standard of values and a correct definition of what is right and what is wrong. What is socially agreed by a community is not enough. For it may happen that corruption becomes so widespread that standards are no longer correct or appropriate. Therefore, reference must be made to a permanent concept of good and evil, virtue and vice, right and wrong. This concept should have as its basis something other than the social norms of any particular generation.

Belief in God provides all this, since it ensures a correct concept of the universe and the relationship between the Creator and His creation. It provides the correct concept of the human being, the purpose of his existence and his true position in the universe. It is from this general concept that moral values and principles should be derived. The desire to earn God's pleasure and to avoid His displeasure motivates people to work for the implementation of these principles. They, in turn, are safeguarded by fear of God and by the authority of His law.

Belief in God is necessary for those who invite to all that is good, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, to proceed along their appointed course and bear all its difficulties and hardships. They have to face the tyranny of evil at its fiercest, the pressures of worldly desires at their strongest, as also complacency, weakness and narrow ambition. To do this, they have to be equipped with faith. It is their only weapon. Their support comes from God. Any other aid is exhaustible, any other weapon can be overpowered and any other support is liable to collapse.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

# INTERLUDE
# THE BATTLE OF UHUD°

From the battlefield of words and ideas and concepts the chapter turns now to that of armed combat: the Battle of Uhud. Uhud was not, however, solely an armed confrontation; it was rather a struggle within the Muslim conscience. Its scope encompassed the whole gamut of human behavior, feelings, emotions, aspirations, instincts and limitations. The Quran was there to coach the human soul in the most caring and gentle way, and in a manner that is more comprehensive and effective than any forceful confrontation.

First came the victory, and then the setback. The sweeter and greater triumph, however, was still to come. It was the triumph of enlightenment and of a clarity of understanding the facts as the Quran lays them down. A triumph of having those facts established as convictions. Muslim hearts were put to the test and purified, their ranks were set apart and the whole community proceeded with clearer concepts, more definite values, and stronger feelings than before. Furthermore, the hypocrites were largely set apart. In what ensued, the characteristics of hypocrisy and sincerity, as manifested in feelings, words, behavior and actions, became much clearer, as did the obligations of faith and the responsibilities attendant on it. The battle clearly defined the preparations required of the Muslims in knowledge, devotion, organization, compliance and total dependence on God Almighty, every step of the way. Everything was and is up to Him alone, in times of victory as in times of defeat, in life as in death.

The unexpected defeat suffered by the Muslim community in battle, however, was immeasurably less crucial than the Quranic guidelines and recommendations that followed it. The Muslims, at that time, were in desperate need of such guidance; they needed it a thousand times more than they needed a military victory or the spoils of war. The benefits of that result were even more important and enduring for later Muslim generations. In short, there was a supreme divine purpose behind the defeat suffered by the Muslims. As far as we can ascertain from its outward natural causes, what happened conforms to the normal pattern of things. The Muslims had, in essence, the great privilege of learning from their experience, of gaining more enlightenment and maturity, and of cleansing their ranks and reorganizing and coordinating their plans. The whole experience has proved immensely valuable for later Muslim generations as well.

As soon as the battle on the ground was over, the Quran moved to a wider arena, the human soul and the whole life of the Muslim community. It goes on to mold the community according to God's

will, knowledge and purpose. What God designed for the Muslim community was achieved and it was all for their good, despite the hardships, the travails and the trials and tribulations they experienced.

When discussing the aftermath of the Battle of Uhud, the Quran combines in a remarkable way its review of the events, portrayal of the scenes of conflict, with its pointed commentary and specific directives. These emanate from the events themselves, and they advance specific exhortations and prescriptions for purifying souls, clarifying concepts and freeing hearts and minds from the negative and dark effects of desire, greed, hatred, guilt, negligence, and coveted aspirations.

What is even more interesting is how, while reviewing a military confrontation, the chapter goes on to discuss the evils of usury and the merits of consultation and collective decision-making, or *shura*, despite the fact that at Uhud it led to a disappointing outcome. Furthermore, the chapter deals in a vigorous and thorough style with a wide range of human behavior.

This richness, vitality and comprehensiveness come as no surprise to those who are aware of the divine method. In the dynamics of the Quranic message, an armed confrontation is not merely a clash of artillery, cavalrymen and fighters, nor does it involve pure military planning alone. Rather, such a confrontation cannot be isolated from the greater struggle that takes place inside human consciousness and in the social organization of the Muslim community. The physical battle is closely linked to the purity and dedication of the human conscience and its freedom from the shackles that darken its vision or prevent it from turning to God Almighty. Likewise, it is firmly linked to the foundations and structure on which the life of the Muslim community is organized, in accordance with God's straight and sound order. The divine way of life is built on mutual consultation in all aspects of life, not only in matters of state and governance. It is based on a system of cooperation rather than usury, and the two can never be part of the same structure.

The Quran was addressing a Muslim community in the wake of a battle which, as we have already pointed out, went far beyond a simple armed expedition. It was a battle of wider extent and implication, for individuals as well as for life as a whole. This is the reason for raising in this context subjects such as the condemnation of usury, giving charitably at times of prosperity and need, obedience to God as a condition for His mercy and generosity, the restraint of anger, kindness and the purification from sin through appealing to God for forgiveness, and repentance as a condition for gaining God's pleasure and goodwill. The chapter also talks of God's mercy as reflected in

the benevolence of the Prophet Muhammad and his kindness towards others. Towards the end of the review, the chapter establishes the principle of mutual consultation, or *shura*, as necessary even at the most difficult of times; it stresses honesty and sacrifice and warns against parsimony.

These aspects were all ingredients for raising and preparing the Muslim community for the bigger and wider battle which included armed combat but which was not restricted to it. It remains the battle for the greater prize: overcoming the powers of self-interest, desire, greed and hatred, and establishing values and healthy foundations for the total life of the community.

The object here is to highlight the integrity and the unity of the Quranic faith in dealing with the human individual and all aspects of his behavior and activity. These should revolve around one fundamental principle: worship of, and submission to, God with sensibility and full consciousness. The chapter draws one's attention to the consistency of God's method in dealing with the totality of the human being in every situation, and to the coherent and final outcome of human activity, and to the influence of every move and every action on that outcome.

The all-ranging advice given here is not altogether removed from the context of the battle. People do not triumph in war until they prevail in emotional, moral and organizational struggles. Those who retreated at Uhud were misled by Satan as a result of some misdemeanor. We are reminded that those earlier communities whose prophets led them to victory in battles of faith only triumphed because they started their march with seeking God's forgiveness and support and by cleansing their hearts of all wrongdoing. To abandon usury and adopt an equitable financial system is an essential preparation for victory. An equitable society is more likely to prevail than an exploitative one. Suppression of one's anger and forgiving others are essential for victory, because self-control, solidarity and kindness are highly potent forces in a tolerant society.

Another fundamental tenet in this context is recognition of God's will and the attribution of all eventualities to His wish and command, a concept which this chapter defines clearly and decisively. In the meantime, it confirms God's way of basing the effect of people"s behavior on the nature of their activities, whether right or wrong, compliant or rebellious. People are no more than an image of God's will and an instrument of His command which He puts to whatever purpose He chooses.

Last, but not least, the chapter impresses upon the Muslims the fact that victory is not a matter for them to decide. It is up to God's

will which is translated through their struggle, for which they will be rewarded. The material fruits of victory are not theirs to reap, nor is victory granted to them for their own special gratification. It is brought about for the sake of higher objectives decided by God Almighty. The same applies to defeat, which is brought about in fulfilment of God's will, pursuant to the performance of the Muslim community and whether they discharged their obligations or not. Defeat comes about to achieve certain purposes, predetermined by God and known only to Him, to test people and purify their ranks, establish facts, values and standards, and in order to reveal God's laws for all to see.

Military, political or economic predominance has no value or weight, according to the Quranic message, unless it is based on the divine way which requires the exercise of proper control of personal desires and greed and the upholding of the way of life chosen by God for humanity. Victory must be totally for God and His way, and every human effort must be made for the sake of God and His cause. Otherwise, it is a triumph of one godless group over another godless group, with no benefit for humanity or for human life. Real advantage is gained only when the truth, the indivisible truth, of God's way prevails. There is no other truth in this world. But for this truth to prevail it must conquer the human soul and the daily system of human life. This can only be achieved when human beings conquer their own self-interest, desires, greed and prejudice, when they break free from the chains of materialism and seek God's pleasure and put their trust fully in His hand. It happens when people do their utmost to comply with God's command in every aspect of their lives. Only then can a military, economic or political victory be considered a real one, in God's sight; otherwise it is a godless victory that carries no weight or value whatsoever.

Thus, we are able to appreciate the approach of the chapter in its appraisal of the Battle of Uhud and why it takes the wider view of the human struggle, of which the battlefield represents only one aspect.

### A Brief Account of the Battle of Uhud

Before we go into the Quranic review of the Battle of Uhud, it is fitting to give a brief account of the events of that battle, as recorded in the biographies of the Prophet, in order to gain a better understanding of the Quranic appraisal of the battle and of God's approach in educating and nurturing the Muslim community through the Quran.

The Muslims scored a total victory against the non-Muslim

Arabs at Badr in the second year after the migration. That victory had the makings of a miracle about it. The Quraysh lost its most eminent personalities and its leadership fell to Abu Sufyan, who spared no effort in launching a revenge campaign. The trade caravan carrying a substantial portion of the Quraysh's wealth, which had precipitated the Badr confrontation in the first instance, escaped the fighting and it was that wealth which the Arabs of the Quraysh used to finance the planned retaliation.

Abu Sufyan was able to recruit around three thousand fighters from among the Quraysh and their allies, the Abyssinians, who were accompanied by some of their women so as to deter them from running away. The army left for Madinah in the ninth month, Shawwal, of the third year of the Muslim calendar, and camped near Mount Uhud on the outskirts of Madinah.

The Prophet Muhammad consulted with his people over whether they should meet them outside the city or stay put inside. According to Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, in his biography of the Prophet, Muhammad"s own view was to remain in the city and fortify their defenses around it; if the Arabs decided to enter, the Muslims could engage them in the streets and the women could give support from the rooftops. He was supported by Abdullah ibn Ubayy (the chief of the hypocrites), but a large number, mainly young men who did not attend Badr, insisted that they should go and meet the enemy outside Madinah. As this view seemed to prevail, the Prophet stood up and went to Ayisha's room, donned his fighting attire, and emerged again ready to move. By that time the people had changed their mind and decided that they should not force the Prophet to leave the city. Some of them said: Messenger of God, if you prefer you can stay in Madinah. His reply was: It does not befit a prophet to take off his fighting attire once he has put it on until God decides the duel between him and his enemies. That was the first lesson the Muslims were to learn: once a collective decision has been arrived at by public consultation, there is no way to go but forward. There is no room for dithering, reconsultation and indecision. Things must be allowed to take their natural course and God will decide the outcome.

Shortly prior to this, the Prophet saw in a dream that his sword was cracked, and saw cows being slaughtered, and that he had put his hand inside a strong shield. He interpreted the crack as someone from his household being hit, the cows as some of his Companions being killed and the shield as the city of Madinah. He was, therefore, aware of the outcome of the confrontation, but decided, nevertheless, to comply with the consensus arrived at with his Companions. He was also educating his followers through practical experience. Above

all, he was submitting to God's will which in his heart he felt happy and contented to do.

The Prophet left the city with a thousand Muslims, leaving Ibn Umm Maktum in charge of leading the formal prayer during his absence. When they were half-way between Madinah and Uhud, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, and around one-third of the Muslim contingent withdrew from the expedition, protesting that the Prophet had not respected his views, and that he listened to the boys, so to speak. Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn Haram, the father of Jabir ibn Abd Allah, went after the retreating company, cursing, scolding, and urging them to rejoin the Muslim fighters. He called to them: Come and fight for the cause of God or lend support. They replied: If we knew that you would fight we would not have retreated. Eventually he gave up on them, cursed them and rejoined the Muslim army.

Some of the Helpers, i.e. Muslims from Madinah, asked if they could seek the support of their Jewish allies, but the Prophet refused: the Jews had no part in the confrontation between the Muslims and the idolaters. When one puts one's trust in God and dedicates one's heart and soul to Him, victory will be granted. The Prophet asked his Companions whether anyone of them could lead them closer to the Quraysh and this some of the Helpers did until the party came down the slope of the Valley of Uhud with the mountain to their backs. The Prophet asked his Companions not to start the fighting until he had given the order.

The following morning, the Prophet marshalled around 700 men for battle, including 50 cavalrymen and 50 archers under the command of Abd Allah ibn Jubayr. The Prophet ordered Ibn Jubayr and his men to hold their positions behind the main army and not to leave them no matter what happened, even if you see birds picking up troops one by one. He ordered them to repel the Quraysh attackers with their arrows so that they could not attack the Muslims from the rear.

The Prophet put on two layers of body armour and handed the standard over to Musab ibn Umayr. He placed Al-Zubayr ibn al-Awwam on one flank and al-Mundhir ibn Amr on the other. He surveyed the younger recruits and ordered those he thought were under age to go back. These included Abd Allah ibn Amr, Usamah ibn Zayd, Usayd ibn Zahir, al-Bar ibn Azib, Zaid ibn Arqam, Zaid ibn Thabit, Urbah ibn Aws, and Amr ibn Hizam. Those he allowed to remain with the troop included Samurah ibn Jundub and Rafi ibn Khudayj who were both 15 years of age.

The Quraysh similarly mustered their troops, numbering around 3,000, and including 200 horsemen, with Khalid ibn al-Walid in

charge of the right flank and Ikrimah ibn Abi Jahl commanding the left one.

The Prophet gave his sword to Abu Dujnah Sammak ibn Kharshah, a brave fighter who showed real enthusiasm for battle.

### OLD LOYALTIES TOTALLY DISREGARDED

The first man to come forward from the pagans was Abu Amir, known as the Monk, but whom the Prophet nick-named the Transgressor. He had been a leader of the Aws tribe but he refused to accept the Quranic message and declared open hostility towards the Prophet. He had left Madinah to join the Quraysh in Makkah with the aim of rallying them against the Muslims. He enticed the Makkans to go to war against the Muslims, promising them the support of his tribe, the Aws, whom he said would follow him as soon as they saw him. He was the first man to step into the fighting arena, introduced himself and called over to his people among the Prophet's army to come over to his side. He was rejected and cursed. Declaring that some evil had befallen his people, he went on to fight the Muslims with fanatical zeal.

Abu Dujanah, Jalah ibn Ubayd Allah, Hamza ibn Abd al-Muttalib, Ali ibn Abi Talib, al-Nadir ibn Anas, Saad ibn al-Rabi, to mention but a few, showed tremendous courage when the combat started.

In the early part of the day, the Muslims prevailed and 70 of the most valiant of the pagans fell. The bulk of the Arab troops were scattered and ran back to where the women were camped. The women lifted their dresses and themselves took flight.

As the Muslim archers saw the non-believers withdrawing, they abandoned their assigned positions which the Prophet had ordered them never to leave. They were shouting: The booty. The booty. Their commander ordered them back, recalling the Prophet's instructions, but they took no notice. They went after the loot leaving the Uhud positions undefended.

At that precise point, Khalid ibn al-Walid led the Makkan cavalry in a pincer movement to occupy the Mount abandoned by the archers, so as to attack the Muslims from the rear. When the fleeing Quraysh men saw Khalid and his troops occupying the high ground, they rallied to join them.

The tables were turned. The Muslims went on the defensive and chaos broke out all over the battlefield. The surprise attack from the pagans had thrown the Muslims into disarray; they lost control and panicked. Many Muslims were killed in what ensued and the Makkans were even able to get very close to the Prophet himself who was being defended by a handful of followers. Although they fought

back bravely, all were killed. As for the Prophet, he sustained a wound to his face, and a broken lower incisor. His helmet was shattered. A volley of stones was hurled at him by the Makkans, causing him to fall on his side into a camouflaged ditch which Abu Amir, the Transgressor, had dug to entrap the Muslims. Two metal rings from his visor pierced his cheek.

Amid this confusion, someone shouted: Muhammad has been killed. Whatever morale the Muslims had left was shattered and they were put to flight. Overcome with despair and exhaustion, they were routed and soundly defeated.

As people moved back, some stayed behind, among them Anas ibn al-Nadr. He saw Umar ibn al-Khattab, among other Muslims from both Makkah and Madinah, looking dejected and despondent. He enquired why they were sitting there. When they replied that it was because Muhammad had been killed, he said: What is your life worth after him, then? Get up and die for what he died for. He turned towards the enemy camp and as he passed by Saad ibn Muadh, he said: Saad, how wonderful is the scent of Paradise. I can smell it behind Mount Uhud. He fought until he was killed, with some seventy wounds to his body. Only his sister was able to identify him, only by a mark on his finger.

The Prophet, however, was able to make his way back to the Muslims and the first person to recognize him from behind his visor was Kab ibn Malik who shouted at the top of his voice: Muslims. Hear the good news. Here is the Messenger of God. The Prophet gestured to him with his hand not to say any more, and the Muslims, Abu Bakr, Umar and Al-Harith ibn al-Simmah among them, flocked to him. He led them towards and up the mountain pass. Then they were seen by Ubayy ibn Khalaf on a horse called al-Awd which he used to feed in Makkah, saying: I shall ride this horse to kill Muhammad. When the Prophet heard this he said: It is I who will kill him, by God's will. As Ubayy charged towards the Prophet aiming to fulfil his intention, the Prophet took a lance from al-Harith and threw it at Ubayy hitting him in the collar bone, whereupon he fell down like a bull. The Prophet was sure the man would never recover, as he had said, and he did indeed die on the way back to Makkah.

Soon thereafter, Abu Sufyan, the Makkan chief, called from the top of the mountain: Is Muhammad among you? Muhammad told his Companions not to answer him, and he called again: Is Ibn Abu Bakr among you? No one answered. He called a third time: Is Umar ibn al-Khattab among you? Having received no answer, he turned to his own people and said: You need no longer worry about these men. However, Umar could not restrain himself and called back: You

enemy of God, all the men you mentioned are still alive, and may God give you more bad news. Abu Sufyan said: There has been mutilation among your dead. I neither ordered it nor did it cause me any anger. This was a reference to what his wife, Hind, had done to the body of Hamza, the Prophet"s uncle, after her slave, Waashi, had killed him. She cut open his abdomen, pulled out his liver, chewed it and then threw it from her mouth.

Abu Sufyan then called upon the Makkan deity, saying: Rise and prevail, Hubal. The Prophet urged his people to answer him, but they did not know what to say, and he said: Say: God is higher and more exalted. Abu Sufyan retorted: We have al-Uzza and you do not. The Prophet said: Say to him: God is our Lord, and you have none. Abu Sufyan said: Today avenges the day of Badr, and victory in war goes by turns. Umar answered him, saying: We are not equal. Our dead go to Paradise, but your dead go to Hell.

When the fighting subsided and the Makkans had departed, the Muslims were nonetheless concerned that their enemies would head for Madinah, take their women and children and loot their possessions. The Prophet, therefore, ordered Ali ibn Abi Talib to follow them to see which direction they followed and what their intention was. He said if they dismounted the horses and rode the camels, they would be going to Makkah; otherwise they would be going to Madinah. By God in whose hand is my life, the Prophet said, if they go to Madinah I will go after them and fight them inside it. Ali, however, reported that he had seen them dismount their horses and rode their camels instead. They were moving in the direction of Makkah.

Somewhere along the way disagreement broke out among the Makkans. Some of them argued that they had achieved very little at Uhud. The Muslim high command remained intact and they could easily regroup. Such contenders urged their people to go back to Madinah to annihilate the Muslims. This news soon reached the Prophet and he called his people to prepare to confront the enemy again, adding: Only those who fought [on the preceding day] should join us. Abd Allah ibn Ubayy offered to join the expedition but the Prophet declined his offer. Many Muslims willingly and dutifully prepared themselves to go out to fight again, despite their wounds and their apprehensions. Jabir ibn Abd Allah requested the Prophet to make an exception in his case and allow him to join the army. He said: Messenger of God, I love to be with you in every battle, but my father asked me to look after his daughters on the day of Uhud, and I ask you to let me join you this time. The Prophet granted him permission and led the Muslims out in pursuit of the idolaters of the Quraysh. They went as far as Hamr al-Asad, about 15 kilometers from Madinah.

A man by the name Mabad ibn Abi Mabad al-Khuzi, came to see the Prophet who asked him to catch up with Abu Sufyan's army and dissuade them from launching any attack on the Muslims. Mabad caught up with Abu Sufyan at al-Rawa. Unaware that Mabad had converted, Abu Sufyan asked him: What news have you? Mabad replied: Muhammad has come out with his Companions to pursue you with an army the like of which has not been seen before. Many of them regretted staying behind the first time round. Abu Sufyan said: So what do you think? Mabad replied: If you were to order your troops to march now, I would imagine that by the time you have started to move, you will be seeing their horses.

Abu Sufyan said: By God, we are determined to attack them and wipe them out. Mabad answered: But I advise you against it. At that point Abu Sufyan led his people back towards Makkah.

Abu Sufyan also met with some non-Muslims heading for Madinah and he offered to load their camels with raisins when they returned to Makkah, if they would tell Muhammad from him that they are set to attack and wipe him and his Companions out. When the Muslims heard the message, they said: God is Sufficient for us. He is the best Protector. Their resolve still strong, they waited for three more days and once they were certain that the ungrateful were well on their way to Makkah, they returned to Madinah.

### PREPARATION FOR BATTLE

This **(3:121-3:122)** is the scene, recalled in all its reality and vigor while still fresh and clear in the minds of those being so addressed. The chapter, however, brings into focus other factors that were not visible at the time. First, God's presence and knowledge of all that was going on. The Quran always impresses this fact upon the Muslims so as to reinforce in their hearts a clearer and deeper faith and understanding. It is the major and most fundamental facet of the Islamic system and no one can claim a full understanding of this religion without it being firmly established in both their conscience and their mind.

This **(3:121)** is a reference to the Prophet setting out from Ayisha's home, having donned his battle dress, consulted with his Companions and all of them having arrived at the consensus that the Muslims should go and meet the enemy outside Madinah. The Prophet went on to organize the Muslim troops, including the archers, assigning them duties and positions around the battlefield. But the chapter also introduces a new fact: God hears all and knows all. What a momentous event. God Almighty was witnessing the proceedings. How awesome! God was witnessing the consultation and

was aware of what was going on inside the hearts and minds of all those present.

The other dimension, however, is that some Muslim hearts vacillated. This was a result of the treachery perpetrated by the leader of the hypocrites, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy. Enraged by the Prophet's acceptance of the views of his Companions, in preference to his own view, Abd Allah ibn Ubayy broke away with one-third of the Muslim fighting force, refusing to join the expedition. Having said, as the chapter puts it: *If we know for sure that there will be fighting we would have come with you,* **(3:167)** Abd Allah ibn Ubayy had demonstrated that his heart did not fully accept the Quranic message and that his self-importance was in control of him. The Quranic message demands total dedication and does not tolerate sharing a person's heart with other beliefs.

According to authentic reports regarding **(3:122)**, the two groups were the tribes of Harithah and Salamah, who were influenced by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy's stance. They wavered, struggled with doubt, but, as the chapter affirms, God came to their rescue and gave them heart to stay and fight.

God reveals here some of people's inner thoughts and feelings, which only they and He know. It is He who steers them away from those negative feelings and gives them the courage to go ahead and fight. The Quran recalls the scene, revives the emotions, and reassures the Muslims that God heard and knew all that had taken place, that He was with them all the way. It demonstrates to them that God is looking after them and helping them in their moments of weakness, so that they learn from where to seek help and support the next time they face a similar situation. It directs them to the only certain way: *In God shall the believers trust. In God alone, and in no one else, should the believers put their trust, for, they shall have no other resort.*

Therefore, in the very first two signs of this section, two major tenets of the Quranic message are established: God hears all and knows all, and in God shall the believers trust. They are presented at the correct moment and in the right context, blending perfectly together in rhythm and in nuance, at the very moment when hearts are receptive and ready to learn and understand. Here, then, we also have a good example of the way the Quran deals with events while they are still live, fresh and relevant. Here, we can also see the difference between the Quranic method of relating and interpreting events and other methods that do not aim to touch the human heart or direct, educate and guide human beings.

### A REMINDER OF PAST VICTORY

The chapter takes up the discussion of the battle in which, though they were close to victory, the Muslims did not prevail. It begins with a reference to the hypocrite Abd Allah ibn Ubayy and his followers, who put their own selfish interests ahead of the interests of the faith. It alludes to the two Muslim groups who almost lost heart and withdrew, and concludes with the archers' desertion of their positions, driven by greed in pursuit of booty. The exemplary conduct of some Muslims on the battlefield did not spare the Muslim camp the final and dismal outcome. This was the result of flaws in their ranks and confusion in their thinking.

Before the chapter goes on to analyze and review the events of Uhud, however, the Muslims are reminded of their victory at the Battle of Badr. This provides them with the opportunity to compare the two situations and to reflect on the root causes and results of both victory and defeat, as also on their own weaknesses and strengths. They have to realize that victory and defeat are the result of divine providence, brought about for a specific, predetermined purpose. They have to believe that, after all, everything is in God's hands in all circumstances. **(3:123-3:129)**

The chapter reminds the Muslims of all these facts and explains to them the real reason for their triumph at Badr. **(3:123)** It was God Who brought them victory, and for a purpose shortly to be revealed. They had no other helper or patron, and it is He Whom they should fear and consider. He has the power and authority to grant them victory or leave them to be vanquished. Perhaps if they were to fear God they might learn to thank Him properly and appreciate the favor He bestows on them.

After this opening stroke, the chapter goes on to recall some scenes from Badr itself. **(3:124-3:125)** These were the comforting words the Prophet conveyed to the Muslims when they embarked on their expedition to intercept the caravan, not knowing they would be confronting a formidable fighting force. He conveyed to them the good news of God's support to reassure their hearts and give them strength. He also told them the condition on which that support would be given: that they should persevere and rise to the challenge of the enemy, and fear God and be mindful of Him at all times. Indeed, He will, if you are patient in adversity and fear God, and if they [the non- believers] suddenly attack you, your Lord will supply you with five thousand angels swooping down. **(3:125)**

Then God imparts the fact that everything happens as a result of His will and wisdom. God is the power behind all events. The angels were dispatched to assist the Muslims and lend them moral as well

as material support. Victory is determined by God Almighty and results from His will without intervention from anyone or any other cause or means. God made this only as a happy news for you, so that your hearts might take comfort from it. Victory comes only from God, the Mighty, the Wise. **(3:126)**

Then the chapter explains the purpose behind that victory, pointing out that the way God deals with the ungrateful is of no concern to any human being: It is in order to destroy some of the non-believers, and so abase others that they lose and withdraw. You have no say in the matter. [It is for Him] to accept their repentance or punish them. They are wrongdoers. **(3:127-3:128)**

The Quran assigns the destiny of all people, believers or ungrateful, to God's will. The fate and future of the Quranic message, and those who accept or reject it are determined by God. The Prophet and his followers can only fulfil their obligations and leave the outcome to God. They will receive their just reward, for their loyalty and the efforts they make in support of God's cause.

But there was another reason for stating the principle: You have no say in the matter. The chapter tells us that some people were wondering: Have we any say in the matter? **(3:154)** The object is to make it clear to the Muslims that they had nothing to do with bringing about victory or defeat. All they are required to do is obey, comply and act accordingly. The result is entirely up to God and no body else, not even the Prophet Muhammad. It is of supreme importance that this concept is firmly and clearly established in Muslim hearts and minds.

This reminder of what happened at Badr, and the accompanying admonition, are complemented with a more universal and fundamental truth: the destiny of the whole cosmos is in the hands of God, He forgives and punishes people as He wills. To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth; He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. God is Forgiving and Merciful. **(3:129)**

This passage **(3:137-3:148)** comments on the early events of the Battle of Uhud up to the point at which the victory which was well within the grasp of the Muslim army turned into defeat. As the Quran comments on these events, it seeks to establish certain rules and principles. The events themselves are only a means employed by the Quran to drive the truth home to the Muslims. These comments begin with a reference to an ever-recurring pattern which engulfs those who reject God's message and describe it as a lie. The Muslims are told here that the pagan victory in this particular battle is a one-off incident delivering a particular lesson. They are called upon to demonstrate their steadfastness and to feel their superiority through faith.

If they have suffered, the idolaters have also suffered in the same battle. What happened to the Muslims is useful in certain ways as it helps distinguish those who are firm in their faith and select from among them martyrs who are ready to sacrifice their lives for their faith. Moreover, the Muslims are brought face to face with death, after they had wished for it. Their promises and wishes are thus put to the test. All this helps the Muslim community acquire the necessary equipment to face its enemies and to bring about the desired result of wiping out ungrateful. In both defeat and victory, the overall goal is served.

### UNFAILING LIFE PATTERNS

Many patterns have passed away before you. Go about the earth and see what was the fate of those who described the truth as lies. This is a plain exposition for humanity, as well as a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing. **(3:137-3:138)**

The patterns to which the chapter refers here, and to which it draws the attention of the believers, concern the fate of those who, throughout history, denied God's message and described it as a lie, and the fact that days of fortune and misfortune alternate between people and communities. The patterns identified also test people in order to know whether they are truly believers, and patient in adversity. Another pattern of importance is the fact that victory is always granted to those who are steadfast, while the ungrateful are blotted out. As these corresponding parts are outlined, much encouragement is given to the believers to persevere and remain steadfast. They are consoled for their misfortune, which has not befallen them alone. A similar one has befallen their enemies. They should remember that they have a superior faith and aim to those of their enemies and that they enjoy divine guidance and have a perfect constitution.

Moreover, ultimate victory will be theirs, while their opponents will be vanquished: Many patterns have passed away before you. Go about the earth and see what was the fate of those who described the truth as lies. **(3:137)** The Quran relates the present to the past in order to point to the future. The Arabs who were the first to be addressed by the Quran had nothing in their lives, neither experience nor knowledge, prior to the Quranic message, to enable them to have such a wide view of life and its events. The Quranic message, indeed, gave them a new life and made out of them a nation to lead humanity.

This is a plain exposition for humanity as well as a guidance and an admonition for the God-conscious. **(3:138)** The Quran makes an exposition of the truth to all mankind. It elevates people to a height

which they could never attain without its guidance. But the God-fearing are the only ones who appreciate its guidance and admonition. A word of truth is not appreciated except by a believing heart which is particularly receptive to guidance. A word of plain admonition can only benefit a heart which remembers God. The ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood, or between following guidance and going astray is rarely lacking among people. By nature, the truth is self-evident. What people lack is the desire to follow the truth and the ability to prefer its implementation, because these are initiated only by faith and cannot be preserved except with the fear of God. This explains the need for the repeated emphasis in the Quran on the fact that the truth it tells and the guidance, light and admonition it provides are meant only for the believers and the God-conscious. It is these qualities which enable man to make use of this guidance and benefit by its light, regardless of the difficulties one may face. This is indeed the heart of the matter. There are many people who know the truth but who, nevertheless, remain immersed in falsehood either because they yield to temptation and desire or because they fear to share in the hardship which the followers of the truth may have to endure.

### A CYCLE OF FORTUNE AND MISFORTUNE

Believers must not lose heart, nor should they allow grief to overtake them because of what may happen. **(3:139- 3:140)** They will gain the upper hand, because they have a superior faith. Believers prostrate themselves only to God, while others prostrate before one, or more, of His creatures. This chapter makes it plain to the believers that they are indeed superior and far more exalted than other people. It tells them: You have a superior way of life, because you follow a method established by God while the methods followed by other groups have been devised by His creatures. Moreover, your role is superior, because you have been selected for a position of trust, to convey God's guidance to all humanity. Other people are unaware of this guidance, and have gone astray. Your place on earth is superior, because God has promised you to inherit the earth, while they will sink into oblivion. If you are truly believers, then you are superior. Therefore, you have to demonstrate the strength of your faith by not losing heart and you must not grieve. The rules determined by God make it possible that you may score a victory or suffer a defeat, but the ultimate end after enduring the test and striving hard for God's cause, will be in your favor.

A rule of nature which is seen in full operation is the dealing out of fortune and misfortune among people according to their actions

and intentions. In this way, true believers are distinguished from hypocrites. Mistakes are identified and the way ahead becomes very clear, misfortune befalls you, a similar misfortune has befallen other people as well. Such days [of fortune and misfortune] We deal out in turn among men. God wants to mark out those who truly believe. **(3:140)** When hardship is followed by prosperity and the latter is followed by another hardship, people"s true characters emerge. They reveal how clear their vision is, how much they panic and how patient in adversity they can be, as well as how great their trust in God is and how submissive to His will they are. Thus true believers are distinguished from those who are hypocrites. Their true hearts are apparent to all. The Muslim camp is strengthened by the fact that those who do not truly belong to it are identified and excluded.

In the process of molding the first Muslim community and preparing it for the role of leadership of humanity, God has tested it with hardship after prosperity, and with a bitter defeat after a spectacular victory. Both have happened according to the laws of nature which never fail. That is because God wants the Muslim community to learn what brings it victory and what causes it defeat. Thus, it becomes more obedient to God and reliant on Him. It becomes better aware of the true nature of its Quranic way of life and what its implementation requires of its community.

## LESSON 89(11). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
## SIGNS 3:121-3:129

**Madinah:** *And when you had set forth in the early morning*
*from your family to place the ones who believe at their positions*
*for fighting, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (3:121)
*Mention when two sections are about to lose heart among you*
*although God was their Protector.*
*And let the ones who believe put their trust in God.* (3:122)
*And, certainly, God helped you at Badr*
*while you were humiliated in spirit. So be God-conscious*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (3:123)
*Mention when you have said to the ones who believe:*
*Suffices you not that your Lord will reinforce you*
*with three thousand among the angels?*
*Ones who are caused to descend,* (3:124)
*yea! if you endure patiently and are God-conscious?*
*And if they approach you instantly here, your Lord will reinforce*
*you with five thousand angels—ones who are sweeping on.* (3:125)
*And God made it but as good tidings to you*
*so that with it your hearts will be at rest.*
*And there is no help, but from God,*
*The Almighty, The Wise,* (3:126)
*for He will sever a selection of those who were ungrateful*
*or suppress them so they turn about*
*as ones who are frustrated.* (3:127)

*It is none of thy affair at all if He turns to them in forgiveness or He punishes them, for, truly, they are ones who are unjust.* (3:128 )
*And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (3:129)

## COMMENTARY°

We should note here that the Quranic message meets all this hostility with tolerance. It simply commands the Muslims not to take such people as their intimate friends. It does not, however, encourage a policy of measure for measure with the ungrateful. It does not require them to return the ungrateful" hate, grudges and evil schemes with similar feelings and attitudes. It seeks only to provide protection for the Muslim community. It simply warns the Muslims of the danger presented by other people.

A Muslim treats all people with the tolerance characteristic of Islam. He is motivated by his love to do good to all humanity. He tries to foil the evil schemes of others against him, but he does not scheme against anyone. He does not harbor grudges although he takes care not to fall victim to other people's grudges. Only when a Muslim faces aggression which aims to turn him away from his faith and from following and implementing the method of life God has laid down, is he required to fight back and break down all barriers which prevent people from following divine guidance. His fight is a struggle for the cause of God. It is not a fight in pursuit of revenge. He fights because he loves what is good for humanity, not because he nurses a grudge against those who have caused him harm. He struggles in order to remove the barriers which prevent the goodness of the Quranic message from reaching mankind, not to win power and dominion over others. His aim is to implement the perfect system under which all humanity enjoy justice and peace. He is not after raising any national banner or building any empire. Many a statement in the Quran confirm this fact. Furthermore, the history of the first Muslim community proves this. This method of life is absolutely good. Only the enemies of humanity try to turn them away from it. It is those enemies who must be chased and kicked out of every position of leadership they occupy. This is the duty God imposes on the Muslim community. It once fulfilled it as it should be fulfilled. It is called upon to fulfill it all the time. Struggle under this banner and for the cause of God will continue until the Day of Judgment.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

*And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance ...* (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

## LESSON 89(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[2]

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:130-3:143

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Consume not usury—that which is doubled and redoubled—and be God-conscious so that perhaps you will prosper.* (3:130)
*And be God-conscious of the fire that was prepared for the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:131)
*And obey God and the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (3:132)
*And compete with one another for forgiveness from your Lord and for a Garden whose depth is as the heavens and the earth that was prepared for the ones who are God-conscious,* (3:133)
*those who spend in gladness and tribulation and the ones who choke their rage and the ones who pardon humanity. And God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (3:134)
*And those who, when they committed an indecency or did wrong to themselves, they remembered God. Then, they asked for forgiveness for their impieties. And who forgives impieties but God? And persist not in what impiety they committed while they know.* (3:135)
*Those, their recompense is forgiveness from their Lord and Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever. And how bountiful is the compensation for the ones who work!* (3:136)
*Customs passed away before you. So journey through the earth; then, look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who deny.* (3:137)

*This is a clear explanation for humanity, a guidance*
*and an admonishment for the ones who are God-conscious.* (3:138)
*And be not feeble nor feel remorse. And you will be among the*
*lofty, if you had been ones who believe.* (3:139 )
*If a wound afflicts you, surely, a wound afflicted the folk*
*similar to that. And these are the days We rotate among humanity*
*so that God knows those who believed and takes witnesses*
*to Himself from among you—and God loves not*
*the ones who are unjust—* (3:140)
*and so that God may prove those who believed*
*and eliminate the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:141)
*Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows*
*not those who struggled among you*
*and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)
*And, certainly, you had been coveting death*
*before you were to meet it.*
*Then, surely, you saw and look on it.* (3:143)

## COMMENTARY°

### A REWARD WORTH COMPETING FOR

These signs make a definitive prohibition of all usury, warn the believers against the Fire which is prepared for the ungrateful and call on them to always fear God in the hope of being granted His mercy and of achieving prosperity. This is immediately followed with an order to hasten to the achievement of God's forgiveness and admission into paradise, which is described as being as vast as the heavens and the earth. We are told that this paradise has been prepared for the God fearing. **(3:133-3:134)**

The first quality given here of this class of people is that they spend in His way in time of plenty and in time of hardship. They are, then, a class of people which is totally different from those who gorge themselves on usury and multiply their money by no effort of their own. Their other qualities are also defined: **(3:133-3:135)**

The style adopted here describes the fulfilment of these duties in a physical movement representing a race towards a certain goal and for a set prize. The prize is forgiveness by God and admission to heaven. It is there to be won, and the believers are invited to make their race and vie with one another in order to win. The prize is set for those who remember God. These have certain qualities which are outlined in the next two signs: they spend their money at all times for the sole reason of earning God's pleasure. They are, then, consistent in their attitude. They follow the way which pleases God, unchanged either by prosperity or adversity. When money comes to

them in plenty, they are not preoccupied with luxurious living. When they suffer hardship and adversity, their sorrow does not become their major preoccupation. They are conscious of their duty at all times and in all situations. They are free from miserliness and greed. They watch God and fear Him. The human being loves money and he is always reluctant to part with his money. Nothing makes him spend his money voluntarily in all situations except a motive far stronger than that of possession and self-interest. That motive is the fear of God. It is a pleasant, profound feeling which works on man"s soul so that it becomes free, unfettered by greed and personal desire.

They restrain their anger, and forgive their fellow men. Remembering God also works in this respect, providing similar motives and leaving similar effects. Anger is a human reaction which is normally combined with or followed by a fit of temper. It is both natural and essential to the human being. However, it can only be overcome through that higher perception made possible by the positive effects of remembering God and the spiritual strength which a person achieves through looking up to horizons which are far superior and more sublime than a person's own needs and interests.

Restraining anger is only the first stage; it is not sufficient on its own. A person may restrain his anger but harbor a grudge. His outward fury becomes a deeply-seated, inward rancor. Needless to say, anger and fury are preferable to harboring grudges and rancor. The Quranic sign emphasizes that the God-conscious do not allow their anger to become a grudge. They forgive others and do not harbor any ill feelings. When anger is deliberately restrained it becomes a burden, a fire which burns internally sending its smoke over a person's conscience in order to blur his vision. Forgiveness, however, ensures a release from that burden. It gives peace of heart and conscience, as well as an easy movement in a more sublime world.

God loves the benevolent. Those who spend their money at times of prosperity and hardship are benevolent. Similarly, those who do not hesitate to forgive others after having been angered by them are also benevolent. The Quranic sign tells us that God loves all who are benevolent. Use of the term love here is significant. Its pleasant, friendly, bright and compassionate shades are in perfect harmony with the pleasant and honorable atmosphere of help and forgiveness.

### THE HUMAN BEING: SAINT OR SINNER

Another quality of the God-conscious is highlighted here. **(3:135-3:136)** They are those who seek forgiveness whenever they slip into sin and make sure of not knowingly disobeying God's orders. How compassionate this religion is. Before He calls on people

to be compassionate to one another, God, limitless is He in His glory, shows them one aspect of His own compassion of which they themselves are the recipients, so that they may learn.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

## Lesson 89(13). Critical Thinking Strategy Practicing Discussion: Clarifying and Questioning Interpretations

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:144-3:148

**Madinah:** *And Muhammad is only a Messenger.*
*Surely, Messengers passed away before him.*
*Then, if he died or be slain, will you turn about on your heels?*
*And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all.*
*And God will give recompense*
*to the ones who are thankful.* (3:144)
*It had not been for any soul to die, but with the permission of God.*
*Prescribed is that which is appointed. And whoever wants*
*a reward for good deeds in the present, We will give him that.*
*And whoever wants a reward for good deeds in the world to come*
*We will give him that. And We will give recompense*
*to the ones who are thankful.* (3:145)
*And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands*
*fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of*
*God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in*
*And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)
*And their saying had been only that they said: Our Lord!*
*Forgive us our impieties and our excessiveness in our affairs.*

*And make our feet firm and help us against the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:147)
*So God gave them a reward for good deeds in the present and the goodness of reward for good deeds in the world to come. And God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (3:148)

## COMMENTARY°

### MUHAMMAD: MAN, PROPHET AND MESSENGER

This sign **(3:144)** refers to a particular incident which took place during the Battle of Uhud. The Prophet had stationed a detachment of soldiers on top of the mountain behind the Muslim army. They were the rearguard, equipped with bows and arrows to repel any attack launched against the Muslim army from behind. When the battle appeared to be all over, most of them left their positions, against the express orders of the Prophet. A battalion of the enemy forces were thus able to go round the mountain and attack the Muslims from the rear. The Prophet himself was injured: his front teeth were broken, and his face was bleeding.

The situation became chaotic and the Muslim army was in disarray. At this moment, someone cried out: Muhammad is killed! Such a great shock was this to the Muslims, that many of them turned round to return to Madinah. They went up into the mountain, shattered, defeated, in despair. However, the Prophet himself, with a small group of his Companions, stood firm. He called to his Companions as they began to retreat. When they heard him, they began to rally. God helped them regain their moral strength and allowed them to be overtaken by a momentary slumber so as to give them strength, security and reassurance, as will be explained later.

This sequence of events is used in the Quran to drive home to the Muslims certain fundamental principles about life and death and the history of divine faith: **(3:144)** This is an elementary fact. How is it then that the Muslims show themselves to be oblivious of this fact when it stared them in the face during the battle?

The message is also greater than its advocates and lasts longer. Many of its advocates have come and gone, while it continues to serve as guidance to succeeding generations. Its followers maintain their link with God Almighty, its originator, Who has sent Messengers to convey it to humanity. He is Everlasting and believers address their prayers to Him. None of them may turn about on their heels or turn their back on God's guidance. This explains the stern warning implicit in this sign: **(3:144)**

The vivid description of turning back is here to be noted: Will

you turn about on your heels? The physical movement depicted here brings alive the meaning of abandoning faith as if we see it with our own eyes. The sign does not refer to the physical turning away as a result of defeat in battle. It is more concerned with the psychological turning about when a voice cried out that Muhammad was killed. Some Muslims felt that there was no point in continuing the fight against the idolaters, since the death of Muhammad signalled the end of this faith and the end of combat against idolatry. This psychological effect is delineated in terms of turning about on one's heels, which was a movement that actually took place during the battle.

### DEATH AND REWARD

No one can die except by God's leave, at a term appointed. He who desires the reward of this world, We shall give him thereof and to him who desires the reward of the life to come, We shall give thereof. We shall reward those who are grateful to Us. **(3:145)**

Every human soul, then, lives up to its appointed time. No one dies before his time. Neither fear, nor the desire to live longer can postpone anyone"s appointed time. Courage and adventure, on the other hand, will not shorten one"s life. As this idea sinks into the minds of the believers they simply do not think of death as they go about fulfilling their responsibilities and carrying out their religious duties. This is the reason why people, throughout the ages, have seen that those who believe in God are not encumbered by their desire to prolong their time on earth or by their fear of what lies ahead. They simply rely on God as they carry out their duties with patience and reassurance.

Since everybody dies at his or her appointed time then everyone should think of the life to come and should work hard in order to achieve the greater happiness of that life: He who desires the reward of this world, We shall give him thereof and to him who desires the reward of the life to come, We shall give thereof **(3:145)**

### LESSONS FROM THE HISTORY OF THE PROPHETS

Many a Prophet has fought with many devout men alongside him. They never lost heart on account of what they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken nor succumb. God loves those who are patient in adversity. All that they said was this: Our Lord! Forgive us our sins and our excesses in our affairs. Make firm our steps, and give us victory over the ungrateful. God has granted them the reward of this life and the best reward of the life to come. God loves those who do their duty well. **(3:146-3:148)**

The example which the chapter gives here is a general one, which neither mentions any prophet by name nor specifies a particular nation or people. The outcome of this is that the Muslims feel themselves to belong to the advocates of true faith throughout history. They learn that the cause of faith is one which has been present throughout history and that they are only one battalion in a great army of the faithful: Many a Prophet has fought with many devout men alongside him. They never lost heart on account of what they had to suffer in God's cause, and neither did they weaken nor succumb. **(3:146)** There were many prophets who mobilized large groups of fighters who withstood all manner of hardship and suffering. They never yielded or gave up their fight. Such determination is characteristic of believers who know that they have to fight for their faith. God loves those who are patient in adversity. They persevere and show no weakness. Their determination remains strong. When these are described as being loved by God, the expression has its particular effect on the present generation of believers. It helps heal their wounds and it is accepted as ample and generous compensation It for every hardship.

The description so far shows only what is apparent of the attitude of those believers in situations of difficulty and trial. Now the chapter goes on to describe their inner feelings. It shows them as observing all standards of propriety when they address God. The testing times, the difficulties and the dangers do not make the believers oblivious of their need to turn to God. As they do, their first request is not victory, as would have been expected, but forgiveness for their errors and excesses. Prayer for increased strength and victory over the enemy comes second: All that they said was this: **(3:147)** They do not pray for any great bounty or reward. They have not implored God to give them the reward of either this life or the life to come. Their humility when they turn to God and address Him is too great to allow them to do this, and despite the fact that they are fighting for His cause. They pray only that He will grant them forgiveness of their sins, make firm their steps, and grant them victory over the ungrateful.

To these very people who have asked nothing for themselves, God has given everything, out of His grace. He has given them all that is desired and coveted by those who seek the riches of this world. He has also given them everything that those who prefer the reward of the life to come yearn for: God has granted them the reward of this life and the best reward of the life to come. (Verse 148) He further acknowledges that they have done well. Their good manners are combined with a very effective way of fulfilling their duty of jihad,

exerting every effort for the cause of God. He, therefore, declares that He loves them. His love is greater than all reward and superior to all bounty: God loves those who do their duty well. **(3:148)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

## Lesson 89(14). Critical Thinking Strategy Reasoning Dialogically: Comparing Interpretations

Dialogical thinking refers to thinking that involves a dialogue or extended exchange between different points of view. Whenever we consider concepts or issues deeply, we naturally explore their connections to other ideas and issues within different domains or points of view. Critical thinkers need to be able to engage in fruitful, exploratory dialogue, proposing ideas, probing their roots, considering subject matter insights and evidence, testing ideas, and moving between various points of view. When we think, we often engage in dialogue, either inwardly or aloud with others. We need to integrate critical thinking skills into that dialogue so that it is as fruitful as possible. Questioning is one form of dialogical thinking.

Reasoning dialogically means using a thinking that involves a dialogue between different points of view as the Quranic example shows. Deeply explore the connections to the ideas expressed in these Quranic signs. You should be guided to first engaging in an exploratory dialogue where you study the ideas, explore the roots of these ideas, consider the evidence of the subject matter testing the ideas as you move between multiple points of view. You should engage in an inward dialogue with yourself or an outward one with others. You need to learn how to integrate the Quranic critical thinking skills with your dialogue.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran) Signs 3:149-3:155

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! If you obey*
*those who were ungrateful, they will repel you back on your heels*
*and you will turn about*
*—ones who are losers.* (3:149)
*Nay! God is your Defender*
*and He is Best of the ones who help.* (3:150 )
*We will cast into the hearts of those who were ungrateful, alarm,*
*because they ascribed partners with God.*
*And He sends not down for it authority.*
*And their place of shelter will be the fire.*
*And miserable will be the place of lodging*
*of the ones who are unjust.* (3:151)
*And, certainly, God was sincere to you in His promise when you blasted the enemy with His permission until you lost heart and you contended with one another about the command and you rebelled after He caused you to see what you longed for in the spoils of war. Among you are some who want the present and among you are some who want the world to come. Again, He turned you away from them that He test you and, certainly, He pardoned you.*

*And God is Possessor of Grace for the ones who believe.* (3:152)
*When you mount up, not attentive to anyone and the Messenger calls you from your rear, then, He repaid you, lament for lament, so that you neither feel remorse for what slipped away from you, nor for what lit on you. And God is Aware of what you do.* (3:153)
*Again, He caused to descend safety for you after lament. Sleepiness overcomes a section of you while a section caused themselves grief thinking of God without right, a thought out of the Age of Ignorance. They say: Have we any part in the command? Say: Truly, the command is entirely from God. They conceal within themselves what they show not to you.*
*They say: If there had been for us any part in the command, we would not be killed here.*
*Say: Even if you had been in your houses those would have departed—whom it was prescribed they be slain—for the Final Place of sleeping, so that God tests what is in your breasts and He proves what is in your hearts. And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (3:154)
*Truly, those of you who turned away on a day two multitudes met one another, only Satan caused them to slip back for some of what they earned. And, certainly, God pardoned them. Truly God is Forgiving, Forbearing.* (3:155)

## COMMENTARY°

Another passage **(3:149-3:155)** within the context of the Quran's review of the Battle of Uhud and its events now begins. The comments it includes aim at correcting the concepts of the believers, enhancing their awareness of their situation, warning them of pitfalls which lie in their way and what the enemy may scheme against them. The defeat of the Muslims at Uhud provided the ungrateful, the hypocrites and the Jews in Madinah with a suitable climate to spread their hostile propaganda. Madinah was not yet a wholly Muslim city. The Muslims there were largely a foreign element, to which the spectacular victory at Badr imparted an awe-inspiring stature. When they were defeated at Uhud, attitudes were markedly changed. The enemies of Islam found in that defeat a chance to declare their hostility and spread their poisonous rumors. They were quick to exploit the tragedy which had affected every Muslim family and to try to create confusion in the minds of Muslims.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

**Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works**

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us here in an exchange of the believers to the ungrateful: *Say: Will we call to other than God what can neither hurt nor profit us? And are we to be repelled on our heels after God guided us like one whom the satans lured, bewildered in and on the earth although he has companions who call him to the guidance saying: Approach us? Say: Truly, the guidance of God is The Guidance. And we were commanded to submit to the Lord of the worlds* (6:71) *and to perform the formal prayer and be God-conscious of Him. And it is He to Whom you will be assembled.* (6:72)

Analyze this sign based on the Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood Quranic dialectical reasoning after studying these verses.
I understood that the guidance of God is The Guidance.

## LESSON 89(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assignments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN)
## SIGNS 3:156-3:171

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be not like those who were ungrateful and said about their brothers when they traveled through the earth or had been ones who are combatants: If they had been with us, neither would they have died, nor would they have been slain, so that God makes this a cause of regret in their hearts. And God gives life and causes to die. And God is Seeing of what you do.* (3:156 )

*And if you were slain in the way of God or died, certainly, forgiveness and mercy from God are better than what they gather in the present.* (3:157)

*And if you died or were slain, it is, certainly, to God you will be assembled.* (3:158)

*And it is by the mercy of God you were gentle with them. And if you had been hard, harsh of heart, they would have broken away from around you. So pardon them and ask for forgiveness for them. And take counsel with them in the affair. But when thou art resolved, then, put your trust in God. Truly, God loves the ones who put their trust in Him.* (3:159)

*If God helps you, then none will be one who is a victor over you. And if He withdraws His help from you, then, who is there who helps you after Him? And in God put their trust the ones who believe.* (3:160)

*It had not been for a Prophet that he defraud.*
*And whoever defrauds, what he defrauded will approach him*
*on the Day of Resurrection. Again, the account will be paid in full*
*of every soul for what he earned*
*and they will not be wronged.* (3:161)
*So, then, is he who followed the contentment of God like he who*
*drew the burden of the displeasure of God and whose place*
*of shelter will be hell?*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (3:162)
*They have degrees with God.*
*And God is Seeing of what they do.* (3:163)
*Certainly, God showed grace to the ones who believe when he*
*raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recounts*
*His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book*
*and wisdom. And, truly, before that they had been,*
*certainly, clearly wandering astray.* (3:164)
*And why, when an affliction lit on you, surely, you lit two times its*
*like on them. Say: Where is this from? Say: It is from yourselves.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (3:165)
*And what lit on you on a day when the two multitudes met*
*one another was with the permission of God that He would know*
*the ones who believe* (3:166)
*and He would know those who were hypocrites.*
*It was said to them: Approach now! Fight in the way of God or*
*drive back. They said: If we would have known there would be*
*fighting, we would, certainly, have followed you.*
*They were nearer to disbelief on that day than to belief.*
*They say with their mouths what is not in their hearts.*
*And God is greater in knowledge of what they keep back.* (3:167)
*Those who said to their brothers while they sat back:*
*If they obeyed us, they would not have been slain.*
*Say: Then, drive off death from yourselves,*
*if you had been ones who are sincere.* (3:168)
*And assume not those who were slain in the way of God*
*to be lifeless. Nay! They are living with their Lord.*
*They are provided for,* (3:169)
*glad for what God gave them of His grace. And rejoice at the good*
*tidings for those who have not yet joined them from behind them.*
*There will be neither fear in them,*
*nor will they feel remorse.* (3:170)
*They rejoice at the good tidings of the divine blessing from God*
*and His grace and that God will not waste*
*the compensation of the ones who believe,* (3:171)

COMMENTARY°

As for those of you who turned away on the day when the two hosts met in battle, Satan caused them to slip only in consequence of something that they themselves had done. But now God has pardoned them. Indeed, God is Much forgiving, Forbearing. Believers, be not like those who disbelieve and say of their brethren, when they travel on earth or go forth to war, Had they stayed with us they would not have died, nor would they have been killed, so that God places a source of despair in their hearts. It is God alone Who grants life and causes death. God sees all that you do. If you should be slain or die in God's cause, surely forgiveness by God and His grace are better than all the riches they amass. If you should die or be slain, it is to God that you shall be gathered. **(3:155-3:158)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

## Lesson 89(16). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Deep Questioning

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

## Quranic Chapter 3: The Family of Imran (Al-i-Imran)
## Signs 3:172-3:180

Madinah: *those who responded to God and the Messenger after wounds lit on them. For those of them who did good among them and were God-conscious, there is a sublime compensation.* (3:172)

*Those to whom humanity said: Truly, humanity has gathered against you, so dread them, but it increased them in belief and they said: God is enough for us.*
*And how excellent is He, The Trustee.* (3:173)

*So they turned about with divine blessing from God and grace and evil afflicts them not and they followed the contentment of God and God is Possessor of Sublime Grace.* (3:174)

*It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors.*
*So fear them not, but fear Me*
*if you had been ones who believe.* (3:175)

*And let not those who compete with one another in ingratitude dishearten you. Truly, they will never injure God at all. God wants to assign no allotment for them in the world to come and for them is a tremendous punishment.* (3:176)

*Truly, those who bought ingratitude at the price of belief will never injure God at all.*
*And for them will be a painful punishment.* (3:177)

*And those who were ungrateful should not assume that the indulgence We grant to them is better for them.*
*We only grant indulgence to them so that they add sin!*
*And for them is a despised punishment.* (3:178)

*God will not forsake the ones who believe to what you are in until He differentiates the bad from what is good.*
*And God will not inform about the unseen, but God elects from His Messengers whom He wills.*
*So believe in God and His Messengers.*
*And if you believe and are God-conscious, then,*

*for you there is a sublime compensation.* (3:179)
*And assume not those who are misers that what God gave them of His grace is better for them. Nay! It is worse for them. To be hung around their necks will be what they were misers with on the Day of Resurrection. And to God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth. And God is Aware of what you do.* (3:180)

## COMMENTARY°

The fact that God's Messenger singled out those who had actually fought at Uhud for this new call is particularly significant. Perhaps the Prophet did not wish the feelings of defeat and misfortune to be the last that remained with the Muslims after the battle. He called on them to chase the pagans in order to drive home to them that all that had happened was merely a test and an experience which was not the end of the matter. They remained strong while their victorious enemies were weak. It was an experience which was certain to be followed by victory once they had shaken off their weakness and failure, and responded to the call issued to them by God and His messenger.

As a corollary, the Prophet may have decided that the pagans should not leave the battlefield overjoyed and boastful at their victory. He, therefore, followed the pagans so as to make it clear to them that they had not caused any permanent damage to the Muslims; there still remained enough of them to chase off the pagan army. Those objectives were fulfilled, according to historical reports.

The Prophet might have also wished to make clear to the Muslims and to all humanity the birth of a faith that meant everything to its adherents. They had absolutely no aim or objective in their lives other than to serve the cause of their faith. They lived for it and they looked to nothing beyond it. They spared nothing of themselves. They offered all as a sacrifice for their faith. This was a new phenomenon the like of which had never been seen before. It was necessary that all humanity realized this after the believers themselves had realized it. Nothing could reflect the birth of this faith better than the marching of those who responded to God's call after misfortune had befallen them. Their march was both spectacular and awesome. It clearly reflected the fact that they relied totally on God. They did not care for people"s scaremongering about the size of the pagan host as told by the messengers sent by Abu Sufyan, their chief.

Similarly, the hypocrites depicted the pagans as extremely mighty. Those believers, however, cared nothing for all this: Those who responded to the call of God and the Messenger after misfortune had befallen them: a great reward awaits those of them who contin-

ued to do good. When other people warned them: A big force has gathered against you, so fear them, that only strengthened their faith and they answered: (3:172-3:173) In this way, the Muslim community declared in the clearest of terms the birth of this faith. The wisdom behind the Prophet's plan is now clearly apparent to us.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

## LESSON 89(17). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

**HOW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:181-3:189

**Madinah:** *Certainly, God heard the saying of those who said:*
*Truly, God is poor and we are rich. We will write down what they said and their killing of the Prophets without right.*
*And We will say:*
*Experience the punishment of the burning!* (3:181)
*That is for what your hands put forward*

*and that God is not unjust to His servants.* (3:182)
*Those who said: Truly, God made a compact with us that we*
*believe not in a Messenger until He approaches with a sacrifice to*
*be consumed by the fire. Say: Surely, Messengers brought about to*
*you before me the clear portents and even of what you spoke.*
*Then, why have you killed them*
*if you had been ones who are sincere?* (3:183)
*Then if they denied you, surely,*
*Messengers before you were denied who drew near*
*with the clear portents and the Psalms*
*and the illuminating Book.* (3:184)
*Every soul is one that experiences death. Your account will be paid*
*with full compensation on the Day of Resurrection.*
*Then, whoever was drawn away from the fire and was caused to*
*enter the Garden, surely, won a triumph.*
*And what is this present life*
*but the delusion of enjoyment?* (3:185)
*You will, certainly, be tried with your wealth and yourselves and*
*you will, certainly, hear much annoyance from those who were*
*given the Book before you and from those who ascribed partners*
*with God. And if you endure patiently and are God-conscious,)*
*then, truly, that is of the commands to constancy.* (3:186)
*And when God took a solemn promise from those who were given*
*the Book: You will make it manifest to humanity and keep it not*
*back. Yet they repudiated it behind their backs and exchange it for*
*a little price. And miserable will be what they buy!* (3:187)
*Assume not that those who are glad for what they brought and who*
*love to be praised for what they accomplish not, assume not, then,*
*that they will be kept safe from the punishment.)*
*And for them, a painful punishment.* (3:188)
*To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and of the earth.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (3:189)

## COMMENTARY°

This section of the chapter reviews some Jewish activities and claims that reflect an attitude of impertinence and disrespect, not only towards the Muslims, but towards God Almighty Himself. Not only did some of the Jews refuse to honor their financial commitments to the state, but had the impudence to say: God is poor, we are rich. **(3:181)**

The chapter draws their attention to values that are enduring and fundamental as well as to those that are ephemeral and short-lived. It stresses that life is finite and short; all beings eventually die and in

the Hereafter there are rewards, and there are gains and losses. We read: He who shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into Paradise shall indeed have gained a triumph. The life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment. **(3:185)** They are told that they will be tested regarding their lives and their wealth; they will meet with hostility and harassment from the ungrateful and the people of earlier revelations which they can only resist with perseverance, with fear of God, and in steadfast compliance of His order which will also save them from the fire.

These divine directives continue to be as valid and as relevant for Muslims today as in the future. They are addressed to every Muslim community intending to revive and uphold the Quranic message. God will open their eyes to the hurdles and difficulties awaiting them, as well as the suffering and sacrifices they have to endure. Ultimately, their hearts and minds should aspire to rewards God has in store for them; suffering, death, and tribulation are all quite bearable. God calls to Muslims everywhere, as He did with that first generation, that: Every soul shall taste death, and you shall be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which you have earned. He who shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into paradise shall indeed have gained a triumph. The life of this world is nothing but an illusory enjoyment. You shall most certainly be tried in your possessions and in your persons; and you shall hear much hurting abuse from those who were given revelations before you, and from those who set up partners with God. But if you persevere and continue to fear God—that is indeed a matter requiring strong resolve. **(3:185-3:189)**

Today, the Quran, as the book of this timeless Muslim community, remains its comprehensive constitution, its beacon and trusted guide, just as its enemies and its mission remain the same.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?

4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 6:104-6:105 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:
Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

## LESSON 89(18). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 3: THE FAMILY OF IMRAN (AL-I-IMRAN) SIGNS 3:190-3:200

**Madinah:** *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition,* (3:190)
*those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! **You** had not created this in vain. Glory be to **You**! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191)
*Our Lord! Whomever **You** have caused to enter the fire, surely, **You** had covered him with shame and there will not be for the ones who are unjust any helpers.* (3:192)
*Our Lord! Truly, we heard one who calls out, cries out for belief: Believe in your Lord! So we believed. Our Lord! So forgive **You** our impieties and absolve us of our evil deeds and gather us to **You** with the pious.* (3:193)
*Our Lord! Give us what **You** had promised us through **Your** Messengers and cover us not with shame on the Day of Resurrection. Truly, **You** will not break **Your** solemn declaration.* (3:194)
*And their Lord responded to them: I waste not the actions of ones who work among you from male or female. Each one of you is from the other. So those who emigrated and were driven out from their abodes and were maligned on My way and who fought and were slain, I will, certainly, absolve them of their evil deeds. And I will, certainly, cause them to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers*

*run, a reward for good deeds from God. And God, with Him is the goodness of rewards for good deeds.* (3:195)
*Let not the going to and fro delude you*
*of those who were ungrateful in the land* (3:196)
*—a little enjoyment—again, their place of shelter will be hell.*
*And it will be a miserable Final Place.* (3:197)
*But those who were God-conscious of their Lord, for them will be Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, a hospitality from God.*
*And what is with God is best for the pious.* (3:198)
*And, truly, among the People of the Book are those who believe in God and what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend to them, ones who are humble toward God.*
*They exchange not the signs of God for a little price.*
*Those, for them, their compensation is with their Lord.*
*And, truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* (3:199)
*O those who believed! Excel in patience and be steadfast.*
*And be God-conscious of God*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.* (3:200)

## COMMENTARY°

This is the closing passage of a chapter rich in subject matter and imagery. It defines and establishes the fundamentals of the Quranic outlook and, through the debate with the people of earlier revelations and later on with the hypocrites of Madinah and the Arab ungrateful, removes all the confusion and misinterpretation all those groups tried to create. It expounds the divine order of life, its human and financial obligations, and teaches the Muslims how to honor those obligations and how to deal with the hardships and ordeals encountered in so doing. It shows the Muslims how to dedicate themselves and their possessions to fulfilling those enormous obligations.

These concluding strains resonate perfectly with the theme and the style of the chapter as a whole in content as well as context and presentation. This section presents a most profound concept: that the entire physical world is an open book which in itself conveys the signs and evidence of faith. It points to the hand that runs it with care and prudence, and reveals that beyond this life there is another where accountability and reward will be decided. These signs, however, are only perceived and appreciated by people who understand; those who do not go through life with their eyes and minds closed to the overwhelming marvels of this open book.

This represents one of the most fundamental concepts of the Quranic outlook on the physical world, and the very close and har-

monic relationship that exists between it and the human being's basic and pristine nature. This concept asserts that the physical world, in itself, is living and tangible proof of the existence of its Creator, on the one hand, as well as a manifestation of the system that underpins its existence, and the purpose, the principle and the meaning that define that existence, on the other. This concept is of the utmost importance in defining the human being's attitude towards the physical world and its Lord, God Almighty, and is, therefore, a central pillar of the Quranic outlook on all existence.

The closing sign encapsulates God's advice to the Muslims and represents what is required of them, and the obligations whose fulfilment will guarantee them success and accomplishment. Believers, be patient in adversity, and let your patience never be exhausted, be ever ready and fear God so that you may prosper. **(3:200)** It is an ending that fits beautifully with the central theme of the chapter and all the other subjects it deals with.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•
Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words
Develop criteria for evaluation
Recognize and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

# Lesson 90(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluations: Clarifying Values and Standards

## How is developing criteria for evaluation by clarifying values and standards used in the Quran?

### Criteria Include

**Clear evidence:** *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

**Meditation, pondering, considering:** *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

**Recollection:** *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

**Reflection:** *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

**Taking to heart:** *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

**Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises:** *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

**Bringing your proof, showing your evidence:** *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

**People of intellect and reflection:** *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

**Explaining distinctly:** *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

*you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

**Being reasonable:** *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

**Being just and fair:** *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

*Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some?* (2:85)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:1-33:8

**Madinah:** *O Prophet! Be God-conscious*
*and obey not the ones who are ungrateful*
*and the ones who are hypocrites.*
*Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise.* (33:1)
*And follow what is revealed to you from your Lord.*
*Truly, God is Aware of what you had been doing.* (33:2)

*And put thy trust in God. And God sufficed as a Trustee.* (33:3)
*And God made not two hearts for any man in his interior. Nor made He your spouses those whom you divorced saying: Be as the back of my mother! Nor made He your adopted sons, your sons. That is but a saying of your mouths.*
*And God says The Truth and He guides to the way.* (33:4)
*Call to them by the names of their fathers. That is more equitable with God.*
*But if you know not their fathers, they are your brothers in the way of life and your defenders. And there is no blame on you in what mistake you made in it, but what your hearts premeditated.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:5)
*The Prophet is closer to the ones who believe than their own souls. And his spouses are their mothers and those imbued through the wombs, blood relations, some of them are closer to some other in what is prescribed by God than the other ones who believe and ones who emigrate, but accomplish what you may for your protectors as ones who are honorable— that which had been inscribed in the Book.* (33:6)
*Mention when We took a solemn promise from the Prophets and from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus son of Mary. We took an earnest solemn promise from them* (33:7)
*so that He ask the ones who are sincere about their sincerity. He prepared for the ones who are ungrateful a painful punishment.* (33:8)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter depicts a period of time when the Quranic character of both the community and the state had begun to take shape but had not yet developed sufficiently or acquired its full authority. That took place after Makkah fell to Muslims and people began to embrace the new faith in large numbers allowing the state and its new system to establish their roots.

The Chapter undertakes an important part of social reorganization imparting the distinctive Quranic features of family and community life, outlining their basis in Quranic teachings. It also modifies or outlaws certain practices and traditions, bringing all these within the framework of the Islamic concept of life and society.

It is within the overall discussion of these situations and regulations that the confrontation with the confederate tribes and the Qurayzah expedition are discussed. We are informed of the attitudes of the ungrateful, the hypocrites and the Jews during these events, their schemes to weaken the community and how they always tried

to undermine Quranic moral standards, even in homes. It was precisely this sort of derogatory behavior that aimed at undermining the community either through direct military action and a corresponding defeatism or through efforts to erode the social and moral fabric of the emerging society. Moreover, these events left clear marks on the community to the extent that certain social aspects and particular concepts required modification. Thus the Chapter appears to be an integrated unit with a common thread running through its subject matter. Moreover, the time frame around which it works also constitutes a unifying factor.

The Chapter begins with a directive issued to the Prophet that he must fear God and pay no heed to the ungrateful and the hypocrites. On the contrary, he should obey God and rely on Him alone. This opening relates all that the Chapter includes to the central principle that forms the basis of all Quranic teachings, legislation, its social system and morality. It is the principle that formulates the Quranic message of God and the requirements to submit to Him, implement the code He has outlined and place all our trust in Him.

A decisive word is then given on certain social traditions and practices. This starts with outlining a basic fact: **(33:4)** This alludes to the fact that the human being cannot live in two different universes or follow two different systems. Should he do so he would stumble and become a hypocrite. Since he has only one heart, he must look up to One God and follow one system to the exclusion of all other things, familiar and well established as these may be.

The Chapter immediately moves on to abolish the practice of *zihar*, which involves a man swearing to his wife that she is to him like his mother's back, meaning that she is as unlawful to him to marry as his mother: **(33:4)** It makes clear that these are mere words that cannot establish a fact. They do not make a mother out of a wife; the wife remains the man's wife.

It follows this with abolishing the practice of child adoption: **(33:4)** Thus inheritance within an adopting family is no longer valid. In contrast, the Chapter establishes the overall authority God assigns to His Messenger over all Muslims, placing his authority above what they may wish for themselves. It further establishes a sense of motherly relation between the Prophet's wives and all believers: **(33:6)** The practical effects of the bond of brotherhood established between Muslim individuals shortly after the migration of Makkan Muslims to Madinah are terminated, so as to restrict inheritance and the payment of blood money to real kinsfolk: **(33:6)** Thus, earlier temporary measures are abrogated in favor of natural and permanent ones.

The following comment makes clear that the new system derives

from the Quranic code and from God's ruling. It is written in God's book and established in the covenant made with all prophets, particularly those of them endowed with stronger resolve. In this way the Quran gives legislation and principles their appropriate place within people's thoughts and consciences.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:6 based on the criterion of closeness to the Prophet.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity)

## Lesson 90(2). Critical Thinking Strategy
### Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

## Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)
### Signs 33:9-33:20

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Remember the divine blessing of God to you*
*when armies drew near you*
*and We sent the winds against them and armies you see not.*
*And God had been Seeing of what you do.* (33:9)
*When they drew near you from above you and from below you*
*and when the sight swerved and the hearts reached the throats*
*and you think thoughts about God,* (33:10)
*there the ones who believe were tested and were convulsed*
*with a severe convulsing.* (33:11)
*And when the ones who are hypocrites say,*
*as well as those who in their hearts is a sickness:*
*What God and His Messenger promised*
*is nothing but delusion.* (33:12)
*And when a section of them said: O people of Yathrib!*
*There is no habitation for you, so return.*
*A group of people among them*
*ask permission of the Prophet saying:*
*Truly, Our houses are exposed.*
*But they were not exposed. They want only to run away.* (33:13)
*And if entry was forced against them from all areas and, again,*
*they were asked to dissent, they would have given into it*
*and they would not have but briefly hesitated* (33:14)
*although, certainly, they made a contract with God before that they*
*would not turn their backs to the enemy. And about their compact*
*with God that had been, they are ones who will be asked.* (33:15)
*Say: Running away will never profit you*
*that you ran away from death or killing, then,*
*you will be given enjoyment but for a little.* (33:16)
*Say: Who will save you from harm from God if He wanted evil*
*for you or wanted mercy for you?*
*And they will not find for themselves*
*other than God a protector or a helper.* (33:17)
*Surely, God knows the ones of you who hold off and the ones who*
*converse with their brothers saying to us:*
*Come on! And they approach not the battle themselves*

*but a little,* (33:18)
*being covetous of you. Then, when fear drew near, you will see them looking on you, their eyes rolling like he who is overcome by death. But when their fear went, they abused you with sharp tongues in their covetousness for good things. Those believe not and God caused their actions to fail.*
*And that had been easy for God.* (33:19)
*They assume the confederates go not, withdrawing. And if the confederates approach you, returning, they would wish they were nomads among the ones who are desert dwellers, asking tidings about you.*
*And if they had been among you, they would fight but a little.* (33:20)

COMMENTARY°

The second part shows God's great favor as He repelled the attacking forces of the confederates who besieged Madinah. It describes the confrontation with confederate forces and the Qurayzah Expedition vividly, painting successive images that show inner feelings, outward action and dialogue between groups and individuals. Within the overall picture of the battle and its events relevant directives are issued at the proper junctures. Furthermore, the reporting of events is followed by comments aimed at establishing sound values for the Muslim community. The Quranic method is to paint the action exactly as it took place, stating both apparent and inner feelings, and bringing these into sharp relief. It then gives believers its verdict about their actions, criticizing any deviation and praising what is sound and correct. It also gives directives to avoid error and confirm right practice and values. It relates all this to God's will, human nature and universal laws. Thus, the discussion of the confrontation and the battle starts with the following sign: **(33:9)** In the middle of the discussion, the following facts are highlighted: **(33:16-33:17)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Who are the hypocrites? Analyze the signs in this section based on the above criteria for Quranic Critical Thinking.

Answer the following questions.

What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

# Lesson 90(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Distinguishing Relevant from Irrelevant Information

### Developing Sensitivity to Relevance

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

## Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab) Signs 33:21-33:27

Madinah: *Surely, in the Messenger of God there is for you a fairer,*
*good example for those whose hope had been in God*
*and the Last Day and remembered God frequently.* (33:21)
*When the ones who believe saw the confederates, they said:*
*This is what God and His Messenger promised us*
*and God and His Messenger were sincere.*
*And it increased them not but in belief*
*and to resign themselves to submission to God.* (33:22)
*Among the ones who believe are men who were sincere*
*in the contracts they made with God.*
*Of them are some who satisfied by fulfilling their vow with death*
*and of them are some who wait awhile.*
*And they substituted not any substitution* (33:23)
*so that God gives recompense to the ones who are sincere for their*

*sincerity and punish the ones who are hypocrites had He willed or*
*He turns to them in forgiveness.*
*Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:24)
*God repelled those who were ungrateful in their rage*
*without their attaining any good.*
*And God spared the ones who believe in fighting.*
*And God had been Strong, Almighty.* (33:25)
*And He caused to descend those who were behind*
*among the People of the Book from their strongholds*
*and He hurled alarm into their hearts so that you kill a group of*
*people and make captives of another group of people.* (33:26)
*And He gave you their region as an inheritance and their abodes*
*and their wealth and a region you tread not.*
*And God had been Powerful over everything!* (33:27)

### COMMENTARY°

Alongside its discussion of events the Chapter shows how the true believers looked at the situation as it developed and portrays the contrasting feelings of the hypocrites. This enables us to distinguish sound values from false ones: **(33:22)** The outcome is then given in decisive terms: **(33:25)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:32 based on the above Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand distinguishing between something that is relevant to a conversation and something that is not..

I am practicing staying focussed in conversations I have with people.

## LESSON 90(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:28-33:33

**Madinah:** *O Prophet! Say to thy spouses: If you had been wanting this present life and its adornment, then, approach now. I will give you enjoyment and set you (f) free, releasing gracefully.* (33:28)

*And if you had been wanting God and His Messenger, and the Last Abode, then truly God prepared for the ones who are doers of good among you a sublime compensation.* (33:29)

*O wives of the Prophet! Whoever of you (f) approaches a manifest indecency, her punishment will be multiplied for her twofold. And that would have been easy for God.* (33:30)

*And whoever of you (f) is morally obligated to God and His Messenger and do as ones (f) in accord with morality, We will give her her compensation two times over. We made ready a generous provision for her.* (33:31)

*O wives of the Prophet! There is not among the wives any like you. If you (f) were God-conscious, then, be not soft in your saying so that he become desirous he in whose heart is a sickness, but say (f) a saying of one who is honorable.* (33:32)

*And settle down (f) in your (f) houses and flaunt (f) not your (f) finery as those who flaunted their finery in the previous Age of Ignorance. And perform (f) the formal prayer and give (f) the purifying alms and obey (f) God and His Messenger. God only wants to cause disgrace to be put away from you—People of the House—and purify you with a purification.* (33:33)

### COMMENTARY°

When this second part is concluded we are introduced to the decision that gave the Prophet's wives a choice. They had asked him for a more comfortable standard of living after the Muslim community became more prosperous, having gained much booty as a result of the siege of Qurayzah. They were asked to choose either the fine things of life or relinquish these in preference for pleasing God and His Messenger and earning a better position in the life to come. They

all chose to be with God and His Messenger, preferring this to all worldly riches. They were also told that they would have double the reward if they maintained the path of goodness and remained God-fearing, and double the punishment should they commit any gross indecency. The Chapter explains that this doubling of reward and punishment was a result of their noble status, their relation with the Prophet and the revelation and recitation of the Quran in their own homes, as well as the wisdom they received from the Prophet.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 33:28-33:29 based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I was able to evaluate the Quranic signs in this Lesson in regard to the wives of the Prophet..

# LESSON 90(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

## HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

## WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

## ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB)
## SIGNS 33:34-33:40

**Madinah:** *And remember (f) what is recounted in your (f) houses of the signs of God and wisdom. Truly, God had been Subtle, Aware.* (33:34)

*Truly, the males, ones who submit to God and the females, ones who submit to God and the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe and the males, ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who are morally obligated and the males, ones who are sincere and the females, ones who are sincere and the males, ones who remain steadfast and the females, ones who remain steadfast and the males, ones who are humble and the females, ones who are humble and the males, ones who are charitable and the females, ones who are charitable and the males, ones who fast and the females, ones who fast and the males, ones who guard their private parts and the females, ones who guard and the males, ones who are remember God frequently and the females, ones who remember, God prepared for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* (33:35)

*It had not been for a male, one who believes and a female, one who believes, when God and His Messenger decreed an affair that there be any choice for them in their affair. And whoever rebels against God and His Messenger, certainly, he went astray, clearly wandering astray.* (33:36)

*And mention when you have said to him to whom God was gracious and to whom you were gracious: Hold back your spouse to yourself and be God-conscious. But you have concealed in yourself what God is One Who Shows and you have dreaded humanity whereas God has a better right that you have dreaded Him. So when Zayd satisfied the necessary formality, We gave her to you in marriage so that there be no fault for ones who believe in respect of the spouses of their adopted sons when they (m) satisfied the necessary formality. And the command of God had been one that is accomplished.* (33:37)

*There had been no fault with the Prophet in what is undertaken by him as a duty from God. This is a custom of God with those who passed away before. And the command of God had been a measured measure* (33:38)

*for those who state the messages of God and dread Him and dread none but God, and God sufficed as a Reckoner.* (33:39)

*Muhammad had not been the father of any men from among you,*

*but he is the Messenger of God and the Seal of the Prophets.*
*And God had been Knowing of everything.* (33:40)

## COMMENTARY°

The fourth part makes an indirect reference to the case of Zaynab bint Jahsh, a cousin of the Prophet belonging to a noble Qurayshi family and her marriage to Zayd ibn Harithah, a former slave given as a gift to Muhammad long before his prophethood. The first thing it says about Zayd makes it clear that all believers, men and women, are subject to God's decision in any matter; they do not even have a say in their own personal business. It is God's will that determines everything, and they have to submit to it fully: **(33:36)**

This marriage soon ends in divorce and the situation provides a practical example for the abolition of the effects of child adoption. God's Messenger himself is chosen to provide this example, because adoption was a deeply rooted tradition in the Arabian environment, and its practical effects were very difficult to break. Hence, God's Messenger was to bear this new burden as part of his mission to shape the new Muslim society: **(33:40)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

## Lesson 90(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Analyzing or Evaluating Arguments and Interpretations

### What is an argument?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

## Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab) Signs 33:41-33:52

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Remember God with a frequent remembrance* (33:41)
*and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide.* (33:42)
*He it is Who gives blessings to you and His angels*
*that He bring you out of the shadows into the light.*
*And He had been Compassionate to ones who believe.* (33:43
*Their greetings on the Day they will meet Him will be: Peace!*
*And He prepared for them a generous compensation.* (33:44)
*O Prophet! Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness*
*and as one who gives good tidings and as a warner* (33:45)
*and as one who calls to God with His permission*
*and as a light-giving illuminating lamp.* (33:46)
*And give good tidings to the ones who believe*
*that for them is a great grace from God.* (33:47)
*And obey not the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are*

*hypocrites and heed not their annoyance and put **your** trust in God. And God sufficed as a Trustee.* (33:48)

*O those who believed! If you married the females, ones who believe, and, again, divorced them before you touch them (f), then, there is no waiting period to reckon against; so make provision for them (f), and set them (f) free, releasing gracefully.* (33:49)

*O Prophet! Truly, We have permitted to **you** your spouses (f), those whom **you** had given their (f) compensation and whom **your** right hand possessed from that God gave **you** as spoils of war and the daughters of your paternal uncles and the daughters of your paternal aunts and the daughters of your maternal uncles and the daughters of your maternal aunts those who emigrated with **you** and a woman, one who believes, if she bestowed herself on the Prophet. And if the Prophet wanted to take her in marriage—that is exclusively for **you**—not for the other ones who believe. Surely, We know what We imposed on them about their spouses and whom their right hands possessed (f) that there be no fault on **you**. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:50)

*You will put off whom **you** will of them (f) and **you** will give refuge to whom **you** will. And whomever **you** will be looking for of whom **you** had set aside, there is no blame on **you** to receive her again. That is likelier that will be refreshed their (f) eyes and they (f) not feel remorse and may they (f) be well-pleased with what **you** had given them (f), all of them (f). And God knows what is in your hearts. And God had been Knowing, Forbearing.* (33:51)

*Women are not lawful for **you** in marriage after this, nor that **you** were taking them (f) in exchange for other spouses, even though their (f) goodness impressed **you**, but whom **your** right hand possessed (f). And God had been watching over everything.* (33:52)

## COMMENTARY°

The fifth part begins by making a statement on the status of a woman who gets divorced before the consummation of her marriage. It moves on to organize the Prophet's marital life, stating which women are lawful for him to marry and which are not. This is followed by directives defining the relation between Muslims and the Prophet's homes and wives, both during his lifetime and after his death. It requires them not to mix with any men other than their fathers, sons, brothers, paternal and maternal nephews, other women and their POW/slaves. It states that those who sought to disparage the Prophet and his wives would face severe punishment; they would

be punished both in this life and the life to come. This gives us an impression that the hypocrites and others frequently resort to such disparagement.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

## Lesson 90(7). Critical Thinking Strategy Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

### The Middle Community Islamic Moderation:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of the Quranic message that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of the Quranic message, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of the Quranic message together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles have set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

## Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)

### Signs 33:53-33:58

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Enter not the houses of the Prophet for food unless permission be given to you without being ones who look for the proper time. And when you were called to enter, when you have eaten your meal, then, disperse, and be not one who lingers for conversation. Truly, such had been to harass the Prophet*

*and he is ashamed to ask you to leave.*
*But God is not ashamed before The Truth.*
*And when you asked his wives for sustenance, then, ask them (f)*
*from behind a partition. That is purer for your hearts and their (f)*
*hearts. And it had not been for you to harass the Messenger of God*
*nor marry you his spouses after him ever.*
*Truly, that would have been serious with God.* (33:53)
*Whether you show anything or conceal it,*
*truly, God had been Knowing of everything.* (33:54)
*There is no blame on them (f) to converse freely with their (f)*
*fathers nor their (f) sons nor their (f) brothers, nor the sons of their*
*(f) brothers nor the sons of their (f) sisters, nor their (f) women,*
*nor what their (f) right hands possessed. And be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God had been Witness over everything.* (33:55)
*Truly, God and His angels give blessings to the Prophet.*
*O those who believed! Give your blessings to him*
*and blessings of peace and invoke peace for him.* (33:56)
*Truly, those who malign God and His Messenger, God cursed them*
*in the present and in the world to come and prepared for them*
*a despised punishment.* (33:57)
*And those who malign the males, ones who believe*
*and the females, ones who believe without their deserving it,*
*surely, they lay a burden on themselves of false charges to harm*
*another's reputation and a clear sin.* (33:58)

## COMMENTARY°

The fifth part begins by making a statement on the status of a woman who gets divorced before the consummation of her marriage. It moves on to organize the Prophet's marital life, stating which women are lawful for him to marry and which are not. This is followed by directives defining the relation between Muslims and the Prophet's homes and wives, both during his lifetime and after his death. It requires them not to mix with any men other than their fathers, sons, brothers, paternal and maternal nephews, other women and their POW/slaves. It states that those who sought to disparage the Prophet and his wives would face severe punishment; they would be punished both in this life and the life to come. This gives us an impression that the hypocrites and others frequently resort to such disparagement.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

## Lesson 90(8). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Recognizing Contradictions

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in the Quranic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: The Quran encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which*

*God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced exactly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good such as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably; but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression.* (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

We see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging

marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* interpreted to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 33: THE CONFEDERATES (AL-AHZAB) SIGNS 33:59-33:68

**Madinah:** *O Prophet! Say to thy spouses (f) and your daughters and the females, ones who believe to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f). That is more fitting so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:59)
*If the ones who are hypocrites refrain not themselves and those who in their hearts is a sickness and the ones who make a*

*commotion in the city, We will stir you up against them. Again, they will not be thy neighbors in it, but a little while.* (33:60)
*They are ones who are cursed. Whenever they were come upon, they were taken and were killed with a terrible slaying.* (33:61)
*This is a custom of God with those who passed away before. And you will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* (33:62)
*Humanity asks you about the Hour.*
*Say: The knowledge of it is only with God.*
*And what will cause you to recognize that perhaps the Hour be near?* (33:63)
*Truly, God cursed the ones who are ungrateful*
*and prepared a blaze for them,* (33:64)
*ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. They shall not find a protector nor a helper.* (33:65)
*On a Day when will be turned upside down, their faces in the fire, they will say: O would that we obeyed God*
*and obeyed the Messenger!* (33:66)
*And they will say: Our Lord! Truly, we obeyed our chiefs and our great ones. They caused us to go astray from the way.* (33:67)
*Our Lord! Give them double the punishment*
*and curse them with a great cursing!* (33:68)

## COMMENTARY°

Then follows a directive to the Prophet's wives, daughters and all Muslim women, to draw some of their outer garments over their bodies. (**33:59**) It warns the hypocrites and others similar to them that they may be made to evacuate Madinah in a similar way as the two Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa and al-Nadir were made to do, or that they might be dealt with in the same way as the Qurayzah Jews. All this implies that these people resorted to foul methods to harm the Muslim community in Madinah.

The final part of the Chapter mentions that people frequently ask about the Last Hour. Such questions are answered simply by saying that its knowledge belongs to God. They only need to know that it could be very close. This is followed by an image of the punishment meted out on the Day of Judgement. (**33:66**) It also describes how unbelievers then feel towards their leaders for having led them astray: (**33:67-33:68**)

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

## Lesson 90(9). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Noting Significant Differences and Similarities

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

## Quranic Chapter 33: The Confederates (al-Ahzab)
## Signs 33:69-33:73

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be not like those who maligned*
*Moses. God declared him innocent of what they said.*
*And he had been well-esteemed with God.* (33:69)
*O those who believed! Be God-conscious*
*and say an appropriate saying.* (33:70)
*He will make your actions right for you*
*and forgive you your impieties.*
*And whoever obeys God and His Messenger*
*surely, won a triumph, a sublime triumph!* (33:71)
*Truly, We presented the trust to the heavens and the earth*
*and the mountains, but they refused to carry it*
*and were apprehensive of it. But the human being carried it.*
*Truly, he had been wrongdoing, very ignorant.* (33:72)
*God punishes the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females,*
*ones who are hypocrites and the males,*
*ones who are idol worshippers*
*and the females, ones who are idol worshippers*
*and God will turn to forgiveness toward the males,*
*ones who believe and the females, ones who believe.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:73)

### Commentary°

The Chapter ends on a highly powerful note that leaves a strong and lasting effect: (33:72-33:73) This conclusion illustrates the heavy

burden placed on humanity in general and the Muslim community in particular, since it is this community that shoulders this great trust of faith as well as its advocacy and implementation at individual and community levels. This is in perfect harmony with the particular atmosphere of the Chapter, and with the nature of the social system Islam lays down.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Thinking Works

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.

## Lesson 91(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

### What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

## Quranic Chapter 60: She Who is Put to a Test (al-Mumtahanah)

### Signs 60:1-60:6

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Take not My enemies to yourselves and your enemies as protectors, giving a proposal of affection towards them while they were ungrateful for what drew near you of The Truth. They drive out the Messenger and you because you believe in God, your Lord. If you had been going forth struggling in My way and looking for My goodwill, you keep secret affection for them. Yet I am greater in knowledge of what you concealed and what you spoke openly. And whoever accomplishes that among you, surely, he went astray from the right path.* (60:1)

*If they come upon you, they will be enemies against you. They extend their hands against you and their tongues with evil. And they wished that you be ungrateful.* (60:2)

*Your blood relations will never profit you nor your children. On the Day of Resurrection, He will distinguish among you. And God is Seeing of what you do.* (60:3)

**Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:4)**

**Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:5)**

**Madinah: Book 25: Abraham (60:6)**

### Commentary°

The Chapter begins with this friendly and inspiring address, calling on believers. **(60:1-60:2)** It is an address by their Lord in whom they believe, who calls on them in the name of faith that establishes

their bond with Him, to carefully consider their position. He also warns them against their enemies' schemes and reminds them of the task they have been assigned. In a kindly and friendly way, God makes their enemies His enemies. Thus, He makes the believers feel that they belong to Him. Whoever is hostile to them is actually hostile to Him. They are the people who bear His insignia on earth and the ones He loves. Therefore, it is inconceivable that they should show affection to those who are His and their enemies.

God reminds them of the crimes, aggression and injustice committed by those people against them, their faith and His Messenger: Having committed all such injustices, what basis could there be for friendship and affection? They rejected the truth and drove the Prophet and his followers out of their homes for no other reason than that they believed in God. He reminds the believers of all this, stating in effect that it was for their faith that the ungrateful fought them, not for any other reason. The real issue of contention, i.e. faith, is brought to the fore. They were driven out of their homes for no reason other than faith.

Having thus stated the true issue of conflict, the Chapter reminds the believers that there is no room for intimacy between them and the ungrateful, if they have truly left their homes for God's sake, and in quest of His pleasure. It is not possible for someone to migrate seeking God's pleasure and His cause to combine this with friendship with those who drove him out because of it. Such people are the enemies of God and His Messenger.

The Chapter then adds an implicit warning against what they conceal in their hearts of friendly feelings towards their enemies, God's enemies. He is fully aware of what hearts may secretly harbor and what they leave in the open. This is followed by a fearsome warning that strikes fear in believers' hearts. A believer fears nothing worse than going astray after he has known and followed guidance.

The threat and the warning come right in the middle of an explanation of the true character and evil intentions of the ungrateful. Further explanation follows: **(60:2)** Whenever they have the chance to take advantage of the Quranic message, they will act as open enemies, causing them whatever harm they can, verbal and physical, using every means available.

What is even worse is that they wish the believers to become ungrateful as well. To a believer, this is worse than any verbal or physical harm that can be done to him. To wish him to lose his most valuable treasure of faith and revert to ingratitude is to be his worst enemy. A person who has tasted the sweetness of faith after being ungrateful, who has seen its light after the darkness of ingratitude,

and who has experienced the reassurance and happiness generated by holding the concepts and feelings of a believer will hate to revert to ingratitude, just as much as he would hate being thrown into a fire. It is only an enemy of God who wishes to see him return to the hell of unbelief after he has experienced the happiness of living in the heaven of faith. How could he tolerate the emptiness of ingratitude after he has enjoyed life in the active world of being grateful?

The second round makes only one comment about the strong bond of blood relations, a tie that is deeply rooted in people's hearts. It is a bond that often forces its presence in the form of warm friendliness: **(60:3)** A believer works for the life to come, on which he focuses his hopes. Whatever he does in this life is merely the planting of the seeds. The harvest he awaits is in the life to come. This sign touches his heart with what happens there when all ties of blood are severed, and if the bond of faith is non-existent. This should make it easier for him to abandon such ties in the short life of this world, preferring the permanent bond that remains strong in both this life and the life to come. All these ties will be of no benefit to you. You will be separated from them, because the tie that binds people together is already severed. Belief is the only tie that counts in God's sight. God sees all that you do. **(60:3)** He is aware of the action itself and the intention behind it.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

**HOW DO I MAP?**

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

**CONCEPT MAPPING:**

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be ef-

fective either in a group or by yourself:

**PRE-QUESTIONS:**
Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:
**DEFINITION:**
What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

**CHARACTERISTICS:**
How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

**VISUAL AIDS**

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

**EXAMPLES**
What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

**EXPERIENCE**
What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

## LESSON 91(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[3]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 60: SHE WHO IS PUT TO A TEST
## SIGNS 60:7-60:13

**Madinah:** *Perhaps God will assign between you and between*
*those to whom you were at enmity with them, affection.*
*And God is Powerful.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (60:7)
*God prohibits you not from those who fight not against you*
*because of your way of life nor drive you out of your abodes*
*so be good and act justly towards them.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who act justly.* (60:8)
*God prohibits you only from those who fought against you in your*
*way of life and drove you out of your abodes and were behind*
*expelling you, that you turn to them in friendship.*
*And whoever turns to them in friendship,*
*then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (60:9)

*O those who believed! When the females, ones who believe, drew near to you, ones who emigrate (f), put them (f) to a test. God is greater in knowledge as to their (f) belief. Then, if you knew them (f) as ones who believe (f), return them (f) not to the ones who are ungrateful. They (f) are not allowed to them (m) nor are they (m) lawful for them (f). And give them (m) what they (m) have spent. There is no blame on you that you (m) marry them (f) when you have given them (f) their compensation. And hold back conjugal ties with the ones who are ungrateful and ask for what you (m) spent and let them ask for what they (m) spent. That is the determination of God. He gives judgment among you. And God is Knowing, Wise.* (60:10)

*And if any slipped away from you of your spouses to the ones who are ungrateful, then, you retaliated and give the like to whose spouses went of what they (m) spent. And be God-conscious in Whom you are ones who believe.* (60:11)

*O Prophet! When drew near you the females, ones who are believers, to take the pledge of allegiance to you that they will ascribe nothing as partners with God nor will they steal nor will they commit adultery nor will they kill their children, nor will they approach making false charges to harm another's reputation that they devise between their (f) hands and their (f) feet, and that they rebel not against you in anything that is honorable. Then, take their (f) pledge of allegiance and ask forgiveness from God for them (f). Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (60:12)

*O those who believed! Turn not in friendship to a folk against whom God was angry. Surely, they gave up hope for the world to come, just as gave up hope the ones who are ungrateful of the occupants of the graves.* (60:13)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter issues a ruling concerning women believers who might join the Muslim community: **(60:10-60:11)** The Prophet concluded the al-Hudaybiyah Treaty with the Quraysh in Makkah and this specified a condition whereby the Prophet and the Muslim community would return to them anyone who went over to the Muslims, even though that person might be a Muslim.

Reports mention that when the Prophet was about to leave al-Hudaybiyah, a few women came over to him seeking to join the Muslim community in Madinah. The pagans asked for their extradition in accordance with the terms of the treaty. It appears that those terms were not conclusive in the case of women. These two signs were revealed to block returning women believers to the ungrateful, for fear

that they would be persecuted on account of their faith. It should be mentioned here that the Prophet and the Muslims abided by this treaty, right from the first moment after its signing.

The first step required by these rules was to test migrating women in order to determine their reasons for migration. In other words, they must not be trying to escape from a marriage that had gone wrong, or be pursuing some other material benefit, or hoping to marry men they were in love with in the Muslim community.

Their test relied on statements made under oath. Whether such a woman had any different motive, God only knew. People simply cannot establish this with any measure of certainty as God knows best their faith. **(60:10)** When they have made their statements under oath, confirming that they are believers, then the Muslim community cannot send them back to the unbelievers. They are no longer lawful [as wives] for the ungrateful, and these are no longer lawful to them! **(60:10)**

After the Prophet's migration to Madinah this issue had been left open, with no rule stated about it in the Quran. Therefore, no couple were separated even if only one accepted Islam while the other did not. This was due to the fact that the Muslim society had not yet by then established firm roots. When al-Hudaybiyah Treaty was concluded, it was time that such a separation be made. Muslims, men and women, should understand that the bond that overrides all other bonds is faith, and they should put this rule into practice.

The provision for separating such couples was accompanied by a provision for compensation. Thus, an unbeliever whose wife left him because she was Muslim was entitled to receive back whatever he had paid to her in dowry at the time of their marriage. The same applied in reverse, should the man be a believer and his wife not.

When this had been done, the Muslims could marry such migrant women, provided that they paid them dowries. Scholars differ as to whether such women should observe a waiting period; as also over the length of the waiting period.

All these rules are then tied to the strongest guarantee a believer has, which is that of watching God and fearing Him: **(60:10)** Indeed, this is the only inviolable guarantee. God's judgment is that of the One who knows what is in people's hearts, the Almighty who has power over all creatures. It is enough that a Muslim should realize the source of this judgment in order to implement it fully, because he knows that he will ultimately return to God.

Should a believer lose what he had paid in dowry, because his unbelieving wife or her family refuses to refund her Muslim husband, as happened in some cases, the Muslim ruler would compensate him

for this, taking this from any money due to the unbelievers whose Muslim wives had migrated to join the Muslim community, or from any war gains made by the Muslim community: **(60:11)** Again this ruling is tied to the same guarantee that ensures the implementation of every Quranic rule to remember God, in whom you believe. (60:11) This is a profound and touching instruction for believers.

We see how these rulings concerning the separation of married couples provide an example of the practical implementation of the Quranic concept of life values and ties. They reflect the unity of the Muslim community and its being distinct from any other. It is a community where all life is based on faith, where all distinctions of race, color, language, family and land are insignificant. There is only one sign that distinguishes between people—the sign of the party to which they belong. There are only two parties: the party of God and the party of Satan.

### WOMEN'S PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Prophet is then instructed on how women should pledge their allegiance, and what the terms of their pledge should be: **(60:12)**

These terms outline the major elements of faith, and provide the framework of the new social system established by the Quranic message. They comprise associating no partners with God in any way whatsoever. They confirm that offenses with prescribed penalties, such as theft and adultery, should never be committed. Women should also pledge never to kill their children. This is a reference to the pre-Quranic practice of burying girls alive, and includes killing embryos for any reason. Women are placed in trust of their pregnancies. Another term of the pledge women give is that they should never lie about who fathered their children.

Perhaps this term, coming as it does after that of refraining from adultery altogether, was to address some practices of pre-Quranic days, when a woman might sleep with several men and when she gave birth to a child, she would choose its father from among them on the basis of looks, or perhaps on some other basis when she knew who its true father was. However, the text includes this and any other case of falsehood in this regard.

The last term in women's pledge of allegiance is that they must not disobey you in anything reasonable. This means a commitment to obey the Prophet in everything he says, because he never ordered anything other than what is reasonable and good. However, this term is also one of the main elements of the Prophet's constitution. It makes clear that obedience of the Muslim ruler remains valid only

within what is reasonable, i.e. what is in line with the Quran.

When women give such a comprehensive pledge of allegiance, their pledges are accepted. The Prophet is asked to pray to God to forgive them what they might have done in the past: **(60:12)** It is God who forgives and pardons.

The Chapter concludes with a general directive: **(60:13)** This is addressed to believers in their capacity of faith, a faith that distinguishes them from all other communities. We have here a general text that applies to the Jews, the idol worshippers and all other enemies of God. All these groups have incurred God's anger. All of them despair of the life to come. They never take it seriously, and never give it a thought. Their despair of it is the same as that of the ungrateful who think that those who died will never return and be resurrected.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

### What is too little courage?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary

and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

### WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height.

## LESSON 92(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[4]

### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

**Science:** In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

**Politics:** Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

**Education:** Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

**Psychology**: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:1-4:10

**Madinah:** *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord*
*Who created you from a single soul and, from it, created its spouse*
*and from them both disseminated many men and women. And be*
*God-conscious through Whom you demand rights of one another*
*and the wombs, the rights of blood relations.*
*Truly, God had been watching over you.* (4:1)
*And give the orphans their property and take not in exchange the*
*bad of yours for what is good of theirs.*
*And consume not their property with your own property.*
*Truly, this had been criminal, a hateful sin.* (4:2)
*And if you feared that you will not act justly with the orphans, then,*
*marry who seems good to you of the women who have orphans, by*
*twos, in threes or four. But if you feared you will not be just, then,*
*one or what your right hands possessed.*
*That is likelier that you not commit injustice.* (4:3)
*And give wives their marriage portion as a spontaneous gift. Then,*
*truly, if they (f) were pleased to offer to you anything of it on their*
*(f) own, consume it wholesomely with repose.* (4:4)
*And give not the mentally deficient your wealth that God assigned*
*to you to maintain for them, but provide for them from it and clothe*
*them. And say honorable sayings to them.* (4:5)
*And test the orphans until when they reached the age for marriage.*
*Then, if you observed them to be of right judgment, then, release*
*their property to them and consume it not excessively and hastily,*
*for they will develop. And whoever had been rich, let him have re-*
*straint and whoever had been poor, then, let him consume as one*
*who is honorable. And when you released their property to them,*
*call witnesses over them. And God sufficed as a Reckoner.* (4:6)
*For men is a share of what was left by the ones who are their*
*parents and the nearest kin. And for women is a share of what was*
*left by the ones who are their parents and nearest kin whether it*
*was little or it was much—an apportioned share.* (4:7)
*And when the division is attended by those imbued with kinship*
*and the orphans and the needy, then, provide for them from it and*
*say honorable sayings to them.* (4:8)
*And let executors dread like those who, if they left behind weak*
*offspring, would fear for them. Then, let them be God-conscious*
*and let them say appropriate sayings.* (4:9)
*Truly, those who consume the wealth of orphans with injustice,*
*consume only fire into their bellies*

*and they will roast in a blaze.* (4:10)

## COMMENTARY°

These simple and basic facts are very profound, having much weight in human considerations. (4:1) Had people been truly mindful of these facts, it would have brought about great changes in their lives, helping them to move from their state of ignorance to a state of intelligence, whereby they would be able to receive proper guidance and accept the true faith. They would, thus, have been able to build a true civilisation worthy of man, the creature who acknowledges God as his Lord and Creator.

This powerful opening to the Chapter is followed with an outline of the foundation upon which the Quranic social system is built: mutual co-operation within the family and the community, care for the weak and vulnerable, protection and honor for women, looking after the property of the community, and the distribution of inheritance among heirs according to a system which ensures justice to individuals and prosperity to the community.

Guardians of orphans are commanded here to hand over to them all their property when they have attained the age associated with sound judgement. Moreover, they are commanded not to marry under-age orphan girls who are in their charge in the hope of absorbing their wealth. As for the weak-minded who, it is feared, will squander their wealth once it is given to them, they should not be handed their property, because it, in fact, belongs to the community which has an interest in it. Hence, it should not he given up to anyone who may use it improperly. Men are also ordered to maintain justice and fairness in their treatment of women generally.

These emphatic orders (4:2-4:6) give us an impression of what was common practice in the days of ignorance in pre-Quranic Arabia where the rights of the weak in general, and orphans and women in particular, were either usurped or denied them altogether. Some of these practices continued to exist in the Muslim community, which was originally carved out of the ignorant Arabian society, until the Quran began to eradicate them altogether. At the same time, the Quran gave the Muslim community new concepts, aspirations, traditions and a whole new face with distinctive features. (4:2)

The Muslims are ordered here to give to the orphans what belongs to them of property that is under their control. They must not exchange any good part of it for something inferior of their own, such as taking their good land, cattle, shares or cash—for even cash may differ a great deal in value—or any other property in which value differences occur. They must not absorb the wealth of the or-

phans, in whole or in part, by joining it to their own property. Any such action is a great sin which God here warns the Muslim community against. They are told **(4:3)** that if they fear they cannot act justly with orphans, then they may marry women who have orphans.

This opening passage of the Chapter now resumes its outline of legal provisions relevant to women, who are indeed the subject matter of much of this Chapter, which derives its title from them: **(4:4)** This sign gives every woman a clear and personal right to her marriage portion or dowry. It tells us something of the practices of a society of ignorance that undermined this right in a variety of ways. One such method was that a woman's guardian would receive this dowry and use it as his own, as if he had made a sale of a commodity he owned and received a fair price for it. Another such form, the mutual marriage, meant that a woman's guardian would give her in marriage to someone in return for the other giving him in marriage a woman under his own guardianship. Here, one woman is exchanged for another in a deal between the two guardians with the interests of both women totally ignored. It is a deal akin to that of exchanging one animal for another. The Quran totally forbids this form of marriage. It considers marriage a unity between two souls on the basis of free choice. The dowry belongs to the woman and she should receive it herself, not her guardian. It requires that the dowry be specified so that the woman can claim it as her own and it should be treated as an obligation that must be fulfilled. Islam further requires the husband to pay it willingly to his wife in the same manner as he gives her an absolutely free gift. If subsequently the woman decides, of her own free choice, to give up part or all of her dowry to her husband, she is free to do so without any sort of pressure whatsoever. In this case, the husband is free to accept what his wife willingly gives him. Relations between the married couple must be based on free choice, on the absence of pressure, and on mutual care and affection. Such a basis leaves no room for reluctance or embarrassment.

### HANDING PROPERTY OVER TO ORPHANS

Having finished with this aspect of the discussion of marriage with orphan girls and other women who have orphan children, the Chapter again picks up the subject of orphans' inheritance. It provides detailed legislation concerning the handing over of their monies to them, having briefly referred to this in the second verse.

Although this property belongs to orphans, it remains, in essence, the property of the community given by God so that the community may make its best use of it. It is the community, therefore, which is the primary owner of property in general. Individuals,

including orphans and those who have left them this property upon their death, are in charge of it so that they may invest and benefit by it and provide benefit to the community at large. They may undertake this task as long as they are able to prove sound judgement. Individual ownership, with all its rights and restrictions, is based on this principle. Orphans who have property, but who are feeble minded and unable to look after their property wisely, are not given control over it. Although their rights of ownership remain intact and cannot be taken away from them, they are not allowed to administer their property. It belongs, as we have said, to the community. Therefore, someone who is able to administer it from the ranks of the community is given charge of it, taking into consideration his degree of kinship to the orphan. Thus, the principle of mutual care within the family, which is the basis of general care within the greater family of the society, is fulfilled. The feeble-minded, however, enjoy the rights of adequate maintenance and clothing out of their property, as well as the right to be treated kindly: **(4:5)**

Feeble-mindedness and sound judgement can be easily detected after a person has attained puberty. Such matters are easily recognized, and they do not require any specific definition. The community can always recognize a person of sound judgement as also one with a feeble mind. The community evaluates the behavior of all. The test, therefore, to make sure that the orphan has reached the age of puberty, which is referred to in the Quranic text by the term "marriage", is the function that can be fulfilled only after the attainment of puberty. **(4:6)**

### Inheritance: A Fair System of Social Security

In the days of Ignorance in pre-Islamic Arabia, no share of inheritance was given to females, and little, if any, was given to young boys. The reason being that neither group could fight against any aggressor. God's law, on the other hand, made inheritance due to all kinsfolk, according to their degree of kinship and their shares, which will be detailed later. It is the view of the Quranic message that members of the same family should help and look after one another. Everyone is required to look after his relatives when they are in need, and to share their liability in paying compensation in cases of causing death to or inflicting injury or bodily harm on others. Therefore, it is only right that relatives should inherit each other, when they leave behind some property, according to their respective kinship. This gives practical effect to the rule that: "gain is commensurate with liability". The Quranic message contains a complete and perfectly coherent system. This is reflected most clearly in the distribution of

rights and obligations. **(4:7)**

Under the Quranic system of inheritance, some relatives take precedence over others. This means that certain relatives do not inherit anything because those who are nearer of kin to the deceased take precedence over them. Therefore, the Chapter states that if such relatives attend the division of inheritance, they may have an unspecified share by way of compensation; so that they do not feel deprived when they see the division which otherwise may have given them a share. This helps to promote family ties, bringing relatives closer together. The same verse also states that orphans and needy people also have a similar claim: **(4:8)**

Before defining the respective shares of inheritance which are due, the Chapter gives another warning against absorbing orphans' property. The way the warning is delivered cannot fail to have a strong effect on people's hearts. It does this by stimulating feelings of love, of compassion for one's own children, of parental fear for them when they are young and weak, and similarly of fear of God who watches over all our actions. It also arouses fear for one's safety in the life to come. The fear of burning in the fire is portrayed here in a very vivid and powerful scene: **(4:9-4:10)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

## LESSON 92(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA) SIGNS 4:11-4:14

**Madinah:** *God enjoins you concerning your children. For the male, the like allotment of two females. And if there had been women, more than two, then, for them (f) two-thirds of what he left. But if there had been one, then, for her is half. And for one's parents, for each one of them a sixth of what he left, if he would have a child. Then, if he be with no child and his parents inherited, then, a third to his mother. Then, if he had brothers, then a sixth for his mother. This is after any bequest he enjoins or any debt. Your parents or your children, you are not informed which of them is nearer to you in profit. This is a duty to God. Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:11) *And for you is a half of what your spouses left if they be with no child. Then, if they (f) had a child, then, for you is a fourth of what they (f) left. This is after any bequest which they bequeath or any debt. And for them (f) a fourth of what you left if you be with no child. And if you had a child, then, for them (f) is an eighth of what you left. This is after any bequest which you bequeath or any debt. And if a man would have no direct heirs, or a woman, but indirect heirs, and has a brother or sister, then, for each one of them (f), a sixth. Then, if there would be more than that, then, they would be ascribed associates in a third. This is after any bequest which is bequeathed or any debt without being one who presses the heirs.*
*This is the enjoinment from God.*
*And God is Knowing, Forbearing.* (4:12)
*These are the ordinances of God. And whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever.*
*And that is the winning the sublime triumph.* (4:13)
*And whoever rebels against God and His Messenger and violates His ordinances, He will cause him to enter fire, one who shall dwell in it forever and he will have a despised punishment.* (4:14)

## COMMENTARY°

At this point, the Chapter explains the Quranic system of inheritance. It starts with an order, made in the form of a strong recommendation, made by God to parents, to maintain justice among their children. This order shows that God, limitless is He in His glory, is kinder, fairer and more merciful than parents are to their own children. It also shows that the whole system of inheritance has been laid down by God, who has given His verdict on every issue concerning parents and children, or that may come up among relatives. People have no choice but to receive their orders from Him and to implement His rulings. This is the proper concept of religion which the Chapter, in its entirety, seeks to explain in the clearest of terms.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.

Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.

Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a way t o get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.

Do not negate or embarrass the students.

Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.

Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Why? If that is so, what follows? Are you assuming that...?

How do you know that? Is the point that you are making that... or, ...? For example? Is this an example of what you mean..., or this?

Can I summarize your point as ...? What is your reason for saying that?

What do you mean when using this word? Is it possible that...?

Are there other ways of looking at it?

How else could we view this matter?

## ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS

What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What Idea am I using in my thinking?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What main distinctions should we draw in reasoning through this?
What idea is the sacred text using in its thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I asked myself how I would follow up with the question I asked. Doing that, I was able to answer what that told me about my question.

## Lesson 92(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Developing One's Perspective: Creating or Exploring Arguments

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully, try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic as Prophet Abraham did. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the people around Prophet Abraham tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers like Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
## Signs 4:15-4:22

**Madinah:** *And those who approach indecency among your wives, call to four among you to bear witness against them (f). Then, if they bore witness to the affair, then, hold them (f) back in their houses until death gathers them (f) to itself*

*or God makes a way for them (f).* (4:15)
*And those two who among you approach that,*
*then penalize them both.*
*Then, if they repented and made things right,*
*then, turn aside from them.*
*Truly, God had been Accepter of Repentance,*
*Compassionate.* (4:16)
*To turn only to God for forgiveness is for those who do evil*
*in ignorance and, again, soon they are remorseful.*
*Then, those are whom God turns to in forgiveness.*
*And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:17)
*And there is not remorsefulness for those who do evil deeds until*
*when one of them was attended by death, he would say:*
*I truly repented now nor for those who die*
*while they are ones who are ungrateful.*
*Those, We made ready for them a painful punishment.* (4:18)
*O those who believed! It is not lawful for you that you inherit*
*women unwillingly, and place not difficulties for them (f) so that*
*you take away some of what you gave them (f), unless they*
*approach a manifest indecency. And live as one who is honorable*
*with them (f).) Then, if you disliked them (f) perhaps you dislike*
*something in which God makes much good.* (4:19)
*And if you wanted to exchange your spouse in place of another*
*spouse and you gave one of them (f) a hundredweight, so take not*
*anything from it. Would you take it by false charges to harm her*
*reputation and in clear sin?* (4:20)
*And how would you take it when one of you had sexual intercourse*
*with the other and they (f) took from you*
*an earnest solemn promise?* (4:21)
*And marry not women whom your fathers married unless it was in*
*the past. Truly, it had been an indecency and repugnant*
*and how evil a way!* (4:22)

## COMMENTARY°

In this passage, the Chapter continues with its purpose of organizing Muslim society, aiming at purifying it of all gross indecency. It provides for the isolation of those who commit such indecency, men and women, while at the same time opening the door for those of them who want to repent, purify themselves and lead a clean and chaste life. It also rescues women from what they used to suffer of humiliation and injustice under ignorant systems, so that the family could establish its firm and sound basis. That was the only way to build the society on firm foundations and within a clean atmosphere.

It concludes with giving a list of the women whom a man is forbidden to marry under Islamic law. This constitutes a part of the organization of family life.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 92(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:23-4:25

**Madinah:** *Your mothers were forbidden to you and your daughters and your sisters and your paternal and maternal aunts and daughters of your brothers and daughters of your sisters and your foster mothers, those who breast fed you, and your sisters through fosterage and mothers of your wives and your stepdaughters, those who are in your care from wives, those with whom you have lain— but if you have not yet lain with them (f), then there is no blame on you; and wives of your sons who are of your loins; and that you*

*should not gather two sisters together unless it be from the past. Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate* (4:23)

*Forbidden to you are the ones who are married women, but from females whom your right hands (f) possessed. This is prescribed by God for you. And were permitted to you those who were beyond these so that with your wealth you be looking as males, ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious males. For what you enjoyed of it from them (f), give them (f) their bridal due as their dowry portion. And there is no blame on you for what you agreed on among yourselves after the duty. Truly, God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:24)

*And whoever of you is not affluent to be able to marry the ones who are free, chaste females, the female believers, then, from females whom your right hands possessed, the ones who are female spiritual warriors, female believers And God is greater in knowledge about your belief. You are of one another. So marry them (f) with the permission of their people, and give them (f) their bridal due as one who is honorable, they being ones who are free, chaste females, without being ones who are licentious females, nor females, ones who take lovers to themselves. And when they (f) are in wedlock, if they (f) approached indecencies, then on them is half of the ones who are free, chaste females of the punishment. That is for those who dreaded fornication among you. And that you endure patiently is better for you. God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:25)

### COMMENTARY°

Now the Chapter mentions in detail the classes of women whom men may not marry. This is one of the measures designed to organize the family and society as a whole.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find

in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act im-*

*morally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10) ]

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

## Lesson 92(5). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

### What are implications?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

### What are consequences?

Consequences follow from our actions.

### Reasoning Well

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

### Implications in Reasoning

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

## Signs 4:26-4:33

**Madinah:** *God wants to make manifest to you and to guide you to*
*customs of those who were before you and to turn to you*
*in forgiveness. And God is Knowing, Wise.* (4:26)
*God wants that He turn to you in forgiveness*
*while those who follow their lusts want that you turn against God*
*in a serious deviation.* (4:27)
*God wants to lighten the burden on you.*
*And the human being was created weak.* (4:28)
*O those who believed! Consume not your wealth between you with*
*falsehood, but that it be a transaction*
*of agreeing together among you. And kill not yourselves.*
*Truly, God had been Compassionate to you.* (4:29)
*But whoever accomplishes that through deep seated dislike*
*and injustice, We will scorch him in a fire.*
*And that would have been easy for God.* (4:30)

*If you avoid major sins that you are prohibited, We will absolve you of your minor sins and cause you to enter a generous gate.* (4:31)

*And covet not what God gave as advantage of it to some of you over others. For men is a share of what they deserved and for women is a share of what they (f) deserved. And ask God for His grace. Truly, God had been Knowing of everything.* (4:32)

*And to everyone We assigned inheritors to what the ones who are your parents and the nearest kin left. And those with whom you made an agreement with your sworn oaths, then, give them their share. Truly, God had been Witness over everything.* (4:33)

### COMMENTARY°

These signs **(4:26-4:28)** provide a perfect and comprehensive comment on the detailed legislation provided by the Quran for the family. It is through this legislation that Quranic society is elevated psychologically, morally and socially to a very high, clean and healthy summit. The comment given in these verses reveals to the Muslim community the truth of what God wants for it by His prescription of these laws and regulations. At the same time, the aims of those who follow their lusts are also revealed.

This passage **(4:29-4:33)** begins with a prohibition against illegally devouring other people's money, explaining that it is only through trade that people may gain money from one another. Illegal gains are described as killing oneself and as utter loss. This is coupled with a warning against incurring punishment in the hereafter as well as a comforting touch in the form of a promise of forgiveness and assured help. The passage also emphasizes that people must not covet what others may have. They should instead ask God to give them what they wish, for He is the One who gives in abundance. These directives come side by side with the establishment of the rights of earning and ownership to both man and woman. At this point, the Quran stresses that God is aware of all things. Instructions given with regard to contracts of allegiance stressing the duty to fulfil these contracts and pledges are followed with a statement that God witnesses everything. Both statements of God's knowledge leave very strong impressions on us. They come, after all, from God, who is well aware of man's constitution and what influences his attitude.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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(vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

## LESSON 92(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA) SIGNS 4:34-4:42

**Madinah:** *Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality are the females, ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34)

*And if you feared a breach between the two, then, raise up an arbiter from his people and an arbiter from her people. If they both want to make things right, God will reconcile it between the two. Truly, God had been Knowing, Aware.* (4:35)

*And worship God and ascribe nothing as partners with Him. And kindness to the ones who are your parents and to the possessors of kinship and the orphans and the needy, to the neighbor who is as a possessor of strangeness and the neighbor who is kin and to the companion by your side and the traveler of the way and whom your right hands possessed. Truly, God loves not ones who had been proud, boastful,* (4:36)

*those who are misers and command humanity to miserliness and keep back what God gave them of His grace. And We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful a despised punishment* (4:37)
*and for those who spend their wealth to show off to humanity and believe neither in God nor in the Last Day. And to whomever Satan would be a comrade, then how evil a comrade!* (4:38)
*And what would be for them if they believed in God and the Last Day and spent out of what God provided them? God had been Knowing of them.* (4:39)
*Truly, God does not wrong even the weight of an atom. And if there be benevolence, He multiplies it and gives that which proceeds from His Presence a sublime compensation.* (4:40)
*Then, how will it be when We brought about from each community a witness and We brought you about as witness against these?* (4:41)
*On a Day those who were ungrateful and rebelled against the Messenger will wish that the earth be shaped over them but they will not keep back God's discourse.* (4:42)

## COMMENTARY°

The last topic in this passage concerns the regulation of the family and the allocation of duties and responsibilities within it. The Chapter also outlines the measures to be taken in order to protect this social institution against the effects of quarrels and disputes so as to eliminate, as far as possible, any negative effects that could destroy it. (4:34) (Note: See Lesson 90(8) for further information.)

It is also part of the nature and essential characteristics of a devoted, believing woman to guard the sanctity of her relationship with her husband. This she maintains in his presence as well as in his absence. She does not reveal what belongs only to him, as one half of the single soul which combines both of them, even inasmuch as a passing look, let alone a full dishonorable relationship. What is forbidden to reveal is decided neither by him nor by her. It is determined by God. It is "the intimacy which God has ordained to be guarded". It is not a matter of pleasing a husband or allowing what he does not mind to be revealed or what society requires to be exposed, should the husband or society deviate from the divine code of living. There is only one rule to determine the limits of what must be guarded. She has to guard that "which God has ordained to be guarded".

This passage starts with fresh effort to regulate the life of the Muslim community, purging it of the remaining traces of the state of ignorance that prevailed in pre-Quranic days and giving more prominence to the main features of the new way of life. It adds a clear

warning against the scheming of the people of former religions. **(4:36-4:42)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

### ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

## Lesson 92(7). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Exploring Implications and Consequences

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
## Signs 4:43-4:50

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Come not near the formal prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying nor defiled but as one who passes through a way until you wash yourselves. And if you had been sick or on a journey or one of you drew near from the privy or you came into sexual contact with your wives and you find no water, then, aim at getting wholesome, dry earth. Then, wipe your faces and your hands. Truly, God had been Pardoning, Forgiving.* (4:43)

*Hast thou not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They exchange fallacy and they want you to go astray from the way.* (4:44)

*And God is greater in knowledge of your enemies. And God sufficed as a protector. And God sufficed as a helper.* (4:45)

*Among those who became Jews are those who tamper with words out of context. They say: We heard and we rebelled and: Hear—without being one who is caused to hear and: Look at us—distorting their tongues and discrediting the way of life. And if they said: We heard and we obeyed and: Hear you and: Wait for us, it would have been better for them and more upright, except God cursed them for their ingratitude. So they believe not but a few.* (4:46)

*O those who were given the Book! Believe in what We sent down, that which establishes as true what was with you, before We obliterate faces, and repel them backward or curse them as We cursed the Companions of the Sabbath. And the command of God had been one that is accomplished.* (4:47)

*Truly, God forgives not to ascribe partners with Him and He forgives other than that whomever He wills. And whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, he devised a serious sin.* (4:48

*Have you not considered those who make themselves seem pure?*

*Nay! God makes pure whom He wills*
*and they will not be wronged in the least.* (4:49)
*Look on how they devise a lie against God;*
*and it sufficed as clear sin.* (4:50)

## COMMENTARY°

The Quranic approach is gentle, gradual. It benefits from God's absolute knowledge of the human being, what is suitable for him and his social environment. The first statement in this approach was a sign revealed in Chapter 2. This was given by way of an answer to questions which indicate that people with a fine conscience based on the Quranic message had begun to feel uneasy about drinking and gambling: **(2:219)** This was the first loud knock on the door that was bound to have its effect on a conscience based on the Quranic message. The criterion which makes something lawful, discouraged or forbidden is whether its harm or evil is greater than its benefit. In this verse we have a clear statement that the case is such with regard to intoxicants and gambling. Their evil is far greater than their benefit. The question, however, went deeper than that.

Then the sign we are now discussing was revealed to tell the believers: **(4:43)** Here we find the wise, gentle approach in action, the sign representing the middle stage between showing drink as repugnant because its harm is greater than its benefit and a state of total prohibition where drink is seen as an impurity of Satan's work. The purpose of this middle stage being to break the habit of drinking by prohibiting it near prayer times, which span the whole day. Some prayers are too close to each other to allow anyone who is given to alcohol time to take one or two drinks and regain enough sobriety to be fully aware of what he is saying. Besides, there were special times for drinking, either early in the day or in the evening. Plus there were prayers that must be offered both in between these times and following them. Hence, a person with a sense of the Quranic message was sure to weigh up the enjoyment he derives from drinking against neglecting his duty of prayer. At this stage, a good Muslim would not abandon his prayers for anything.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

## HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

## LESSON 92(8). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD LOGIC (BEING REASONABLE)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to

support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation. thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It i knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expressio (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[5]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

## SIGNS 4:51-4:59

**Madinah:** *Have you not considered those who were given a share of the Book? They believe in false gods and false deities and they*

*say to those who were ungrateful: These are better guided than those who believed in the way!* (4:51)
*Those are those whom God cursed. And for whomever God curses, then, you will not find a helper for him.* (4:52)
*Or share they in the dominion?*
*Then, they give not humanity in the least.* (4:53)
*Are they jealous of humanity for what God gave them of His grace? Then, surely, We gave the people of Abraham the Book and wisdom and We gave them a sublime dominion.* (4:54)
*Then, among them are some who believed in him and among them are some who barred him. And hell sufficed for a blaze.* (4:55)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful for Our signs, We will scorch them in a fire. As often as their skins were wholly burned, We will substitute with other skins so that they will experience the punishment. Truly, God had been Almighty, Wise.* (4:56)
*And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will cause them to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. For them in it will be purified spouses. And We will cause them to enter into plenteous shady shadow.* (4:57)
*Truly, God commands you to give back trusts to the people. And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly. Truly, how excellent God admonishes you of it. Truly, God had been Hearing, Seeing.* (4:58)
*O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those imbued with authority among you. Then, if you contended with one another in anything, refer it to God and the Messenger if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. That is better and a fairer interpretation.* (4:59)

## Commentary°

The Chapter continues to draw people's attention to the singular attitude of those who claim to be pure, while they believe in falsehood and in arbitrary deviation away from divine guidance. At the same time, they testify that the pagan Arabs were better guided than those who believed in God, His message, and the divine constitution. This is followed by an outright denunciation of these people and their attitude. They are shown as envious and stingy. The true reason for their opposition to Islam which marks their deviation from the faith of Abraham, in belonging to which they took pride, is given together with a clear warning to them that persistence in such an attitude will inevitably lead to Hell.

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### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

## LESSON 92(9). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD DEFINITIVE (TO BE PRECISE)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:60-4:70

**Madinah:** *Have you not considered those who claim that they believed in what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend before you? They want to take their disputes to another for judgment—to false deities—while they were commanded to disbelieve in them but Satan wants to cause them to go astray —a far wandering astray.* (4:60)

*And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God caused to descend and approach now to the Messenger you had seen the ones who are hypocrites barring you with hindrances.* (4:61)

*How then will it be when they are lit on by an affliction for what their hands put forward? Again, they drew near you, swearing by God: Truly, we wanted but kindness and conciliation!* (4:62)

*They are those whom God knows what is in their hearts. So turn aside from them and admonish them and say to them concerning themselves penetrating sayings.* (4:63)

*And We never sent a Messenger, but he is obeyed with the permission of God. And if, when they did wrong themselves, they drew near to you and asked for the forgiveness of God and the Messenger asked for forgiveness for them, they found God Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate.* (4:64)

*But no! By thy Lord! They will not believe until they make you a judge in what they disagreed about between them. Again, they find within themselves no impediment to what you had decided, resigning themselves to submission, full submission.* (4:65)

*And if We prescribed for them that you: Kill yourselves, or: Go forth from your abodes, they would not have accomplished it, but a few of them. And had they accomplished what they are admonished by it, it would have been better for them*

*and a stauncher confirming.* (4:66)
*And, then, We would have given them from that which proceeds from Our Presence a sublime compensation.* (4:67)
*And We would have guided them on a straight path.* (4:68)
*And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies!* (4:69)
*That is the grace from God. And God sufficed as Knowing.* (4:70)

## COMMENTARY°

This passage tackles a very serious issue in the life of the Muslim community. It speaks about the conditions that must obtain for faith to exist and the boundaries that must be observed, i.e. the system laid down for the Muslim community to implement.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
### LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

## LESSON 92(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

### CONNECTING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

### SIGNS 4:71-4:76

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Take your precautions.*
*Then, move forward in companies of men*
*or move forward altogether.* (4:71)
*And, truly, among you is he who lingers behind. Then, if affliction*
*lit on you, he would say: Surely, God was gracious to me*
*that I not be a witness to them.* (4:72)
*And if the grace of God lit on you, certainly, he would say, as if*
*there be not any affection between you and between him:*
*Would that I had been with them*
*so that I would have won a triumph,*
*winning a sublime triumph!* (4:73)
*Then, let fight in the way of God those who sell this present life for*
*the world to come. And whoever fights in the way of God,*
*then, is slain or is vanquished,*
*We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:74)
*And why should you not fight in the way of God and for the ones*
*taken advantage of due to weakness among the men and the*
*women and the children, those who say: Our Lord! Bring us out*
*from this town whose people are the ones who are unjust*
*and assign for us a protector from* ***Your*** *Presence and assign for us*
*a helper from* ***Your*** *Presence?* (4:75)
*Those who believed fight in the way of God. And those who were*
*ungrateful fight in the way of the false deity. So fight the protectors*
*of Satan. Truly the cunning of Satan had been weak.* (4:76)

### COMMENTARY°

The Quran not only teaches the Muslims the rules of worship and religious rites, or moral and ethical principles, as the pathetic view of religion suggests, but it also deals with their life as a whole, covering all the developments and ramifications of life in the real

world. On this basis, the Quranic message rightfully demands full hegemony over human life. It accepts from Muslims, individuals as well as societies, nothing less than total submission and compliance with its way of life and teachings. It specifically rejects the idea that Muslims should, individually or collectively, seek several sources for organizing their life: one for their personal life—religious, ethical and moral aspects as well as rituals of worship—based on God's revelations, and another for economic, social, political and international matters taken from different sources or based purely on human thought. The duty of such thought is nothing more than to derive and deduce from the Quran detailed rules and principles applicable to life's practical and ever-changing situations and developments, as outlined in the last passage of this Chapter. Otherwise, all claims of true belief in Islam are meaningless. Those who adopt such double standards have not fully absorbed the faith and spirit of Islam or appreciated its fundamental principles.

The Muslims are advised to mobilize themselves into either small parties or as a fully-fledged fighting force, and not to allow any of their numbers to dither or lag behind, as often happened in practice. They must be vigilant, not only with respect to their external enemy, but also towards those among them who stayed behind and who discouraged others from joining this battle. They look at it, from their narrow, worldly perspective, as a refusal to join a winning battle, according to their narrow and short-term understanding of victory and success.

The Quran recognizes no legitimate fighting other than what is taken in support of God's cause. It does not accept fighting merely for material gain, dominance or glory, whether personal or national. It does not advocate fighting for the occupation of land or the domination of other communities. It does not approve of fighting which aims at the acquisition or control of industrial raw materials, or consumer markets or for capital and investment. It does not promote fighting for the glory of a particular individual, dynasty, class, state, nation or race. The only fighting it approves of is that undertaken for God's cause, to establish His order and way of life in the world, and to ensure that humanity gains from its benefits, blessings and universal justice. Beyond that, everyone is free to choose one's beliefs, according to one's convictions, under the universal, humane and divine system Islam advocates.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

**How to Build Your Argument** from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

## LESSON 92(11). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD APPROPRIATENESS (TO BE RELEVANT)

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:77-4:87

**Madinah:** *Have you not considered those who when it was said to them: Limit your hands from warfare and perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms? Then, when fighting was prescribed for them, there was a group of people among them who dread humanity, even dreading God or with a more severe dreading, and they said: Our Lord! Why had You prescribed fighting for us? Why had You not postponed it for another near term for us?*
*Say: The enjoyment of the present is little and the world to come is better. For whomever was God-conscious, you will not be wronged in the least.* (4:77)
*Wherever you be, death will overtake you, even if you had been in imposing towers. And when benevolence lights on them, they say: This is from God. And when an evil deed lights on them, they say: This is from you. Say: All is from God. So what is with these folk that they understand almost no discourse?* (4:78)
*Whatever of benevolence lit on you is from God. And whatever evil deeds lit on you, then, is from yourself.*

*And We sent you to humanity as a Messenger.*
*And God sufficed as Witness.* (4:79)
*Whoever obeys the Messenger, surely, obeyed God and whoever turned away, then We sent you not as a guardian over them.* (4:80)
*And they say: Obedience! Then, when they departed from you, a section of them spent the night planning on other than what you have said. And God records what they spend the night planning.*
*So turn aside from them and put your trust in God.*
*And God sufficed as Trustee.* (4:81)
*But no! They meditate not on the Recitation.*
*And if it had been from other than God, certainly,*
*they would have found in it many contradictions.* (4:82)
*Whenever drew near them a command of public safety or fear, they broadcasted it. But if they referred it to the Messenger, and to those imbued with authority among them, they would have known it—*
*those who investigate from among them. And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, certainly,*
*you would have followed Satan, but a few.* (4:83)
*So fight you in the way of God. You are not placed with a burden but for yourself. And encourage the ones who believe.*
*Perhaps God will limit the might of those who were ungrateful.*
*And God is Stauncher in might and Stauncher in making an example.* (4:84)
*Whoever intercedes with a benevolent intercession, there will be for himself a share of it. And whoever intercedes with an intercession for bad deeds,*
*there will be for himself a like part of it.*
*And God had been over everything One Who Oversees.* (4:85)
*And when you were given greetings with greetings,*
*then, give greetings fairer than that or return the same to them.*
*Truly, God had been over everything a Reckoner.* (4:86)
*God, there is no god but He. He will, certainly, gather you on the Day of Resurrection. There is no doubt about it.*
*And who is one who is more sincere in discourse than God?* (4:87)

## COMMENTARY°

Most probably, the Chapter is referring to that group of Muslims whose dignity did not allow them to tolerate harassment and humiliation in Makkah and who, thus, requested that the Prophet grant them permission to fight. The Prophet, in such matters, was complying with God's instructions of restraint, patience, careful preparation and education, awaiting the right moment. But once they were safely settled in Madinah and securely living out of harm's way, they no

longer saw any justification or, at least, no great urgency to fight the enemy.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

## LESSON 92(12). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

### WORTHINESS (FOCUSSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT THE TRIVIAL)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

### SIGNS 4:88-4:91

**Madinah:** *Then, what is it with you that you be two factions concerning the ones who are hypocrites? And God overthrew them for what they earned? Want you to guide whom God caused to go astray? And whomever God causes to go astray, you will never find for him a way.* (4:88)

*They wished for you to be ungrateful as they were ungrateful so you become equals. So take not to yourselves protectors from them until they emigrate in the way of God. Then, if they turned away, then, take them and kill them wherever you found them. And take not to yourselves from them either a protector or a helper,* (4:89)

*but those who reach out to a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise or when they drew near to you, their breasts were reluctant that they fight you or they fight their folk? And if God willed, He would have given them authority over you and they would have fought you. So if they withdrew from you and fight not against you and gave a proposal of surrender to you, then, God has not assigned any way for you against them.* (4:90)

*You will find others who want that they be safe from you and that they be safe from their folk. Whenever they were returned to temptation, they were overthrown in it. So if they withdraw not from you, nor give a proposal of surrender to you and limit not their hands, then, take them and kill them wherever you came upon them. And those, We made for you a clear authority against them.* (4:91)

### COMMENTARY°

The description is that of a group within the Muslim community who lacked discipline and who underestimated the effects of rumor in weakening the community, or its potentially devastating consequences. This group were not in tune with what was happening and did not appreciate the seriousness of the situation. They did not understand how a casual word or a slip of the tongue could lead to unimaginable and unavoidable repercussions for individuals and the whole society. Perhaps because they did not feel complete loyalty to

the Muslim community and were, therefore, not concerned about the effects on it of the spread of malicious rumors at times of both war and peace.

The danger can be devastating in both cases. The dissemination of news of peace in a community ready and preparing for war will spread a degree of relaxation, despite orders to be on the alert, because vigilance due to a threat is stronger than that due to obeying orders. Such moderation of watchfulness can be fatal. Similarly, spreading fear of war in a peaceful self-assured community can disrupt and unsettle it, forcing it to take measures that might be unnecessary and could also be fatal.

These are the features of a community that has not fully completed its organization, or has not demonstrated full loyalty to its leadership, or both. Indeed both qualities were evident in the Muslim community at the time, consisting as it did of groups of various levels of conviction, understanding, and allegiance. It is this disharmony that the Quran deals with here.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**Stage 1**

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

**Stage 2**

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?

What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

**Stage 3**
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase. but in completing the whole project.

**Summary of Critical Thinking:**
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

## Lesson 92(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

### Signs 4:92-4:96

**Madinah:** *And it had not been for the one who believes to kill one who believes unless by error. And whoever killed one who believes by error the letting go of a believing bondsperson and blood money should be handed over to his family unless that family be charitable. And if he had been from the enemy folk of yours and he be one who believes, then, there should be the letting go of a believing bondsperson. And if he had been of a folk who between you and between them is a solemn promise, then, blood money should be handed over to the family and the letting go of a believing bondsperson. Then, whoever finds not the means, then, formally fast for two successive months as a penance from God. And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:92)

*And whoever kills one who believes as one who is willful, then, his recompense is hell, one who will dwell in it forever. And God was angry with him and cursed him and He prepared for him a tremendous punishment.* (4:93)

*O those who believed! When you traveled in the way of God, then be clear and say not to whomever gave you a proposal of peace: You are not one who believes, looking for advantage in this present*

*life. With God is much gain. Thus, you had been like that before,*
*then God showed grace to you, so be clear.*
*Truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:94)
*Not on the same level are the ones who sit at home among the ones*
*who believe—other than those imbued with disability—and the*
*ones who struggle in the way of God with their wealth and their*
*lives. God gave advantage to the ones who struggle with their*
*wealth and their lives by a degree over the ones who sit at home.*
*And to each God promised the fairer. And God gave advantage to*
*the ones who struggle over the ones who sit at home*
*with a sublime compensation* (4:95)
*degrees from Him and forgiveness and mercy.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:96)

### COMMENTARY°

Never should a believer kill another believer, unless it be by mistake. He who kills a believer by mistake must free a believing soul from bondage and pay an indemnity to his family, unless they forego it by way of charity. If the victim belonged to a people who are at war with you, while he himself was a believer, then let his killer free a believing soul from bondage. If he (the victim) belonged to a people with whom you are bound by a covenant, then the penalty is an indemnity to be paid to his family and the freeing of a believing soul from bondage. He who cannot afford the wherewithal must fast for two consecutive months. This is the atonement ordained by God. God is All- Knowing, Wise. **(4:92)**

The Chapter provides legal provisions for four cases of killing, three of which may happen by mistake among Muslims in the same community or in different communities. The fourth is that of deliberate murder which, the Quran insists, should never happen in the first place. Nothing should bring the relationship between two Muslims so low for a murder of this sort to take place. The relationship between two Muslims is too strong, deeply rooted, precious and dearly cherished for such a serious breach to be contemplated. Hence, the Chapter begins by legislating for accidental killing.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

## LESSON 92(14). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

### RIGHT JUDGMENT

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

### SIGNS 4:97-4:100

**Madinah:** *Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—*
*ones who are unjust to themselves—they will say:*
*In what condition had you been? They will say: We had been ones*
*taken advantage of due to weakness on the earth.*
*They will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive*
*enough to emigrate in it?*
*Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell.*
*And how evil a Homecoming!* (4:97)
*But the ones taken advantage of due*
*to weakness of the men and the women*
*and the children who are neither able to access some means*
*nor are they truly guided to the way* (4:98)
*then those, perhaps God will pardon them.*
*And God had been Pardoning, Forgiving.* (4:99)
*And whoever emigrates in the way of God will find in and on the*
*earth many places of refuge and plenty. And whoever goes forth*
*from his house as one who emigrates for God and His Messenger,*
*and, again, death overtakes him, then, surely,*
*his compensation will fall on God.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:100)

### COMMENTARY°

The subject matter here is migration to the lands that follow the Quranic message. Those who had accepted the message, but who still remained in their homes in the land of war are strongly urged to join the Muslim community in Madinah which was striving hard for God's cause, sacrificing their lives and possessions. They are clearly required here to abandon their relatively more comfortable positions in Makkah, where they lived with their families and clans. These were perhaps the ones who are described in these verse as "remaining passive". For, there was no Muslim "remaining passive" in Madinah, other than the hypocrites whose situation was discussed in a totally different tone in the preceding passage.

This first point is followed by a stern warning to those who stay in the land of unfaith. This they do despite their ability to join the Muslim community where they can add to the strength of the believers. Nonetheless, they remain safe in their homes until their souls are gathered by the angels, still in a condition of "wronging themselves". Their abode is hell which is described as an evil destination.

Following this, we have a guarantee from God to anyone who migrates to serve His cause. The guarantee is effected from the moment he leaves home, having no purpose other than joining the camp of believers. The guarantee deals with all the fears entertained by anyone who undertakes such a risky and costly adventure. It also legislates for relations between the Muslim community and others who remain outside its land, including Muslims who have chosen not to migrate.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

## WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

## Lesson 92(15). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Clarity (understandable, to be clear)

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)

### Signs 4:101-4:104

**Madinah:** *And when you traveled on the earth, there is no blame on you if you shorten the formal prayer if you feared that you would be persecuted by those who were ungrateful. The ones who are ungrateful, they had been for you a clear enemy.* (4:101)

*And when you had been among them, performing the formal prayer with them, let a section of them stand up with you and take their weapons. And when they prostrated themselves, then, let them move behind you and let another section approach who has not yet formally prayed. Then, let them formally pray with you and let them take their precaution and their weapons. Those who were ungrateful wished for you to be heedless of your weapons and your sustenance. They would turn against you with a single turning. And there is no blame on you if you had been annoyed because of rain or you had been sick that you lay down your weapons. And take precaution for yourselves. Truly, God prepared for the ones who are ungrateful a despised punishment.* (4:102)

*Then, when you satisfied the formal prayer, then, remember God when upright and sitting and on your sides. And, then, when you were secured, perform the formal prayer. Truly, the formal prayer had been —for the ones who believe — a timed prescription.* (4:103)

*And be not feeble in looking for the folk. If you be suffering, they suffer as you suffer, yet you hope for from God what they hope not*

*for, and God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:104)

## COMMENTARY°

At this particular juncture, the Chapter speaks of the concession God gives to those who migrate or go forth on earth, either on battle or on business, should they fear being taken prisoner by the ungrateful or fear being subjected to hardship and pressure to turn away from their faith. The concession is to reduce formal prayer. This is different from shortening prayers, which is a concession given to any traveler, whether he has anything to fear from the ungrateful or not. The concession to which the passage refers is a special type.

The first thing which draws our attention is the determination to maintain formal prayer even on the battlefield. Yet, this is only natural from the point of view of faith. Since formal prayer is the main weapon in the battle, its use must be regulated in a way suitable to a military battle. Those men whose education was accomplished through the Quran and in accordance with the divine method used to face their enemies with the one weapon which gives them superiority over all others. They were superior because they believed in One God whom they knew very well and whom they were certain would be with them in battle. Another factor in their superiority is their belief in a most noble cause. Moreover, their concept of the universe, life and the purpose of human existence, as well as their social system were elements which added to their superiority. Formal prayer symbolized all this and reminded them of it. Therefore, it worked as a weapon; indeed the most effective weapon in the battle.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) **to interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

## Lesson 92(16). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
## Fairness (right-minded)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
## Signs 4:105-4:112

**Madinah:** *Truly, We caused to descend to you the Book with The Truth so that you will give judgment between humanity by what God caused you to see. And be you not the pleader for ones who are traitors.* (4:105)
*And ask God for forgiveness. Truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:106)
*And dispute not for those who are dishonest to themselves. Truly, God loves not anyone who had been a sinful betrayer.* (4:107)
*They conceal themselves from humanity, but they conceal themselves not from God, as He is with them when they spend the night planning with sayings with which He is not well-pleased. God had been One Who Encloses what they do.* (4:108)
*Lo, behold! You are these who disputed for them in this present life. Then, who will dispute with God for them*

*on the Day of Resurrection?*
*Or who will be a trustee over them?* (4:109)
*And whoever does evil or does wrong to himself, again,*
*asks for forgiveness from God will, truly,*
*find God Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:110)
*And whoever earns a sin, truly, he earns it only against himself.*
*And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:111)
*And whoever earns a transgression or a sin, and, again, accuses*
*an innocent one, surely, laid a burden on himself of false charges*
*that harm another's reputation and a clear sin.* (4:112)

## COMMENTARY°

This passage tells of a story which is unparalleled in the history of humanity. It is a story that proves, on its own, that the Quran must, by necessity, originate with God. Human beings, no matter how sublime or idealistic they may be and how high the standard of purity and morality they may achieve, cannot on their own raise themselves to the standard drawn in these signs without being inspired by God Himself. The standard is as high as a line drawn over the horizon which people can only attain by following the Quranic message. They will never be able to achieve it except through the implementation of it.

At that highly critical juncture in the life of the new Muslim community in Madinah, this whole passage was revealed from on high giving instructions to God's Messenger and the Muslim community to ensure that justice was done to a Jewish person who was wrongly accused of theft. The passage also condemns the actions of a particular household among the Helpers, who were at the time the main supporters and defenders of the Prophet's message and faith.

What standard of purity, justice and morality is this? Indeed, what words could justly describe this standard? For a certainty, whatever we say by way of comment or explanation is dwarfed by the sublime standards that the Quranic message sets and which human beings cannot attain on their own. Only when they give and work hard under the leadership of the Islamic code can they aspire to such heights.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### How Does Open-Minded Critical Thinking Help?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

**Summary of critical thinking:**

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

## LESSON 92(17). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

**We are not judged arbitrarily**: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

**This moral order** works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

**God has entered into covenant** with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

**Reason**: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

**Good deeds**: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:113-4:115

**Madinah:** *And were it not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, a section of them was about to do something that would cause you to go astray. And they cause none to go astray but themselves and they injure you not at all. And God caused the Book to descend to you and wisdom and taught you what you are not knowing. The grace of God had been sublime upon you.* (4:113)

*No good is there in most of their conspiring secretly, but for him who commanded charity or one who is honorable or makes things right between humanity. And whoever accomplishes that —looking for the goodwill of God—then, We will give him a sublime compensation.* (4:114)

*And whoever makes a breach with the Messenger after the guidance became clear to him and follows a way other than that of the ones who believe, We will turn him away from what he turns to and We will scorch him in hell. How evil a Homecoming!* (4:115)

### COMMENTARY°

The style here is very firm, smacking of anger in support of the truth. Real concern for justice is felt throughout the passage. The first aspect of this is the reminder to God's Messenger of the fact that God's book was, in truth, bestowed on him from on high so that he may arbitrate between people in accordance with what God imparted to him of true knowledge. This reminder is followed by an order requiring him never to defend those who betray their trust. He must not contend for them or argue on their behalf. He is further directed to seek God's forgiveness for such arguments in their defense.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

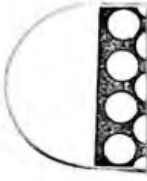
#### WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.

Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others



## LESSON 92(18). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

## SIGNS 4:116-4:126

**Madinah:** *Truly, God forgives not to ascribe partners with Him. And He forgives other than that whomever He wills. And whoever ascribes partners with God, then, surely, went astray,*

*a wandering far astray.* (4:116)
*They call to other than Him none but female gods and they call to*
*but the rebellious Satan.* (4:117)
*God cursed him. And Satan said: Truly, I will take to myself of*
*Your servants, an apportioned share,* (4:118)
*and I will cause them to go astray. And I will fill them with false desires. And I will command them, then they will slit the ears of the flocks. And I will command them, and they will alter the creation of God. And whoever takes Satan to himself for a protector other than*
*God, then, surely, he lost, a clear loss.* (4:119)
*Satan promises them and fills them with false desires*
*and Satan promises them nothing but delusion.* (4:120)
*Those, their place of shelter will be hell*
*and they will find no way to escape from it.* (4:121)
*But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, We will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever,*
*eternally. The promise of God is true.*
*And who is One More Sincere in speech than God?* (4:122)
*Paradise will be neither after your fantasies, nor the fantasies of the People of the Book. Whoever does evil will be given recompense for it and he will not find for himself other than God*
*either a protector or a helper.* (4:123)
*And whoever does as the ones in accord with morality—whether male or female—and is one who believes then, those will enter the*
*Garden and they will not be wronged, in the least.* (4:124)
*And who is fairer in the way of life than he who submitted his face*
*to God and he is one who is a doer of good*
*and followed the creed of Abraham, a monotheist?*
*And God took Abraham to Himself as a friend.* (4:125)
*And to God is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on*
*the earth. And God had been*
*One Who Encloses everything.* (4:126)

## COMMENTARY°

The order to refrain from secret talks is repeated more than once in the Quran. Here, it is a group of people who meet away from the rest of the Muslim community and leadership in order to decide on a certain matter in secret. The Quranic method of education and organization in the Muslim community was such that any person could put his question or problem to the Prophet, either in private if the matter was personal, or in public, if it was of common interest. The aim was that no "pockets" should be formed within the Muslim com-

munity and that no groups be isolated by concepts, interests, ideas or aims different from the rest of the Muslim community. No group within the Muslim community should decide on any matter under the cover of darkness, and then either confront the community with it as a *fait accompli*, or conceal it. Whatever such a group may do, it cannot conceal its action from God who remains present in all situations. The prohibition of secret talks in this case is only one of several Quranic references objecting to such clandestine dealings, away from the rest of the Muslim community.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with

each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.

## LESSON 92(19). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:127-4:134

**Madinah:** *And they ask you for advice about women. Say: God pronounces to you about them (f) and what is recounted to you in the Book about women who have orphans, those to whom (f) you give not what was prescribed for them (f) because you prefer that you marry them (f) and about the ones taken advantage of due to weakness among children and that you stand up for the orphans with equity. And whatever you accomplish of good, then, truly, God had been Knowing of it.* (4:127)

*And if a woman feared resistance or turning aside from her husband no blame on either of them that they make things right between the two, that there be reconciliation. And reconciliation is better. And persons were prone to stinginess. And if you do good and are God-conscious, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:128)

*You will never be able to be just between wives, even if you were eager so incline not with total inclination away from her, forsaking her as if she be one who is in suspense. And if you make things right and are God-conscious, then, truly, God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:129)

*And if the two split up, God will enrich each of them from all His plenty. And God had been One Who is Extensive, Wise.* (4:130)

*And to God is whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on*

*the earth and, certainly, We charged those who were given the Book before you, and to you, that you be God-conscious alone. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And God had been Sufficient, Worthy of Praise.* (4:131)
*And to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And God sufficed as a Trustee.* (4:132)
*If He wills, He will cause you to be put away—O humanity—and approach with others. And over that God had been Powerful.* (4:133)
*Whoever had been wanting a reward for good deeds in the present, then with God is The Reward for good deeds in the present and in the world to come. And God had been Hearing, Seeing.* (4:134)

## COMMENTARY°

This passage complements what the early parts of this Chapter have set out to do. It aims to eradicate all traces of past ignorant days, still manifesting themselves in ideas and practices, especially concerning women, their place in society and the treatment of other vulnerable groups such as orphans and children. The whole Muslim community needed to be purged of such traces in order to allow the family to be established on the basis that man and woman are two parts of a single soul and they both must be given their due and honorable positions. Their interests are to be looked after and family ties need to be strengthened. Any dispute that breaks out within the family should be settled early, before it develops and leads to a severing of ties and the destruction of homes. It is to be remembered that in such cases, the first to suffer are young children who are still in their formative years. The Muslim community, on the other hand must be established along the lines of looking after its vulnerable groups, so that they are not oppressed by those who wield power.

The present passage deals with certain aspects of family relationships, providing a linkage between them and the system that governs the universe. This imparts to us a feeling that the question of the status of women, the role of the family and care for the helpless and vulnerable in society are very serious matters. This is indeed the case.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

### DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

## LESSON 92(20). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE

### HOW DO I DEVELOP COURAGE (DETERMINATION, CONSTANCY)?

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

### SIGNS 4:135-4:141

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor, then God is Closer to both than you are. So follow not your desires that you become unbalanced. And if you distort or turn aside, then, truly, God had been Aware of what you do.* (4:135)

*O those who believed! Believe in God and His Messenger and the Book which He sent down to His Messenger and the Book that He caused to descend before. And whoever is ungrateful to God and*

*His angels and His Books and His Messengers and the Last Day, then, surely, went astray, a wandering far astray.* (4:136)
*Truly those who believed, and, again, disbelieved, and, again, believe and, again, disbelieve, and, again, added to disbelief neither will God be forgiving of them nor guide them to a way.* (4:137)
*Give you good tidings to the ones who are hypocrites that, truly, for them is a painful punishment,* (4:138)
*those who take to themselves the ones who are ungrateful as their protectors instead of the ones who believe! Are they looking for great glory with them? Truly, then, all great glory belongs to God alone.* (4:139)
*And, surely, He sent down to you in the Book that when you heard the signs of God being unappreciated and being ridiculed, then, and sit not with them until they discuss in conversation about other than that or else, you will be like them. Truly, God is One Who Gathers the ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful altogether in hell.* (4:140)
*Those who lie in wait for you, if there had been a victory from God for you, they would say: Have we not been with you? If the ones who are ungrateful had been with a share, they would say: Gain we not mastery over you and secure you from among the ones who believe? And God will give judgment between you on the Day of Resurrection. God will never assign the ones who are ungrateful any way over the ones who believe.* (4:141)

## COMMENTARY°

This passage provides another module in the process of the Muslim community's education to achieve the status God has assigned to it. He, Himself, describes it as *the best community ever raised for humanity*. At the same time, it is part of the consistent line of action aiming to educate the human soul and cure it of all deviation and error. It is a line determined by God, the Creator of the human soul who knows its complexity, nature, desires, aspirations, ability and potential.

This module outlines the basic education process which applies to all generations, and which aims to elevate people from whatever standard they may be at to the heights the Quranic message wants humanity to achieve. At the same time, it gives us a picture of the prevailing situation of the first Muslim community addressed by the Quran. It gives a true image of that community with all its human aspects, including its strengths and weaknesses, traces of their past days of ignorance and their instinctive feelings. It shows the Quranic

method of treating and strengthening the human soul, and encouraging it to stick to the truth of Islam, with all that involves of hard work and sacrifice.

The passage begins with an address to the Muslim community to fulfil the duties its role implies. This means to uphold absolute justice, attaining an ideal standard never before achieved in history except through this Muslim community. It is a standard of justice which requires the community to deal directly with God, disregarding every emotion, prejudice or interest, including what is often called community or national interests. Its only aim is to maintain the God- fearing path which leads to earning His pleasure.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was

emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

## LESSON 92(21). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS

### WHAT IS PERSEVERANCE?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

### WHAT DOES PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS MEAN?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)

## SIGNS 4:142-4:152

**Madinah:** *Truly, the ones who are hypocrites seek to trick God. And He is The One Who Deceives them, and when they stood up for formal prayer, they stood up lazily to make display to humanity. And they remember not God but a little,* (4:142)

*ones who are wavering between this and that, neither with these,*

*nor with these. And whom God causes to go astray*
*thou wilt never find a way for him.* (4:143)
*O those who believed! Take not to yourselves*
*the ones who are ungrateful as protectors*
*instead of the ones who believe.*
*Want you to assign to God clear authority*
*against yourselves?* (4:144)
*Truly, the ones who are hypocrites*
*will be in the lowest, deepest reaches of the fire.*
*And you will not find for them any helper,* (4:145)
*but those who repented and made things right and cleaved firmly*
*to God and made sincere their way of life for God, then, those will*
*be with the ones who believe. And God will give*
*the ones who believe a sublime compensation.* (4:146)
*What would God accomplish by your punishment if you gave*
*thanks to Him and believed in Him?*
*God had been One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (4:147)
*God loves not the open publishing of evil sayings,*
*the open publishing of evil sayings, but by him who was wronged.*
*God had been Hearing, Knowing.* (4:148)
*If you show good or conceal it or pardon evil, then, truly,*
*God had been Pardoning, Powerful.* (4:149)
*Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers and*
*they want to separate and divide between God and His Messengers*
*and they say: We believe in some and we disbelieve in others, they*
*want that they take themselves to a way between that.* (4:150)
*Those, they are, in truth, the ones who are ungrateful.*
*We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful*
*a despised punishment.* (4:151)
*And those who believed in God and His Messengers*
*and they separate and divide not between any of them, those,*
*He will give them their compensation.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (4:152)

## COMMENTARY°

The Chapter moves on to paint another ugly picture of the hypocrites, adding further facts that show their designs to be hollow. It reiterates God's warnings to them: **(4:142-4:143)** These verses again touch believing hearts, which will undoubtedly feel disgust with people who try to deceive God. A believer knows that God, limitless is He in His glory, cannot be deceived. How could that be possible when He knows the innermost secrets of people's hearts and what is even more deeply concealed. Believers realize that a person who tries

to deceive God must have within him a great measure of evil, ignorance and naivety. Hence, they are disgusted with such people and look upon them with contempt.

The Chapter states that while they try to deceive God, it is indeed He who causes them to be deceived. He simply allows them to travel along their erring way, without alerting them by a calamity that opens their eyes. He leaves them to go along until they fall into the abyss towards which they aim. Calamities and trials can often be an act of mercy, as they deter people from going further into error, or they alert them to what they have overlooked. Favors and affluence may also be a temptation for those who have been hardened in sin. As a result, they are left without any shock to wake them up to the realities of which they have become oblivious to. They continue in their sinning ways until they reach their most evil destination.

At this point when contempt of the hypocrites is at its strongest and believers' feelings of the hypocrites' weakness is at its highest, the believers are warned against taking the same way as the hypocrites. As we have explained, the way the hypocrites follow is that of taking the unbelievers for their allies in preference to the believers. They are warned against God's punishment, and shown the destiny of the hypocrites in the hereafter, which is both fearful and humiliating.

Believers! Do not take the unbelievers for your allies in preference to the believers. **(4:144-146)**

Finally, we have a remarkable, inspiring and profoundly effective touch. It comes after mentioning terrible punishment and great, splendid reward, in order to make people realize that God has no need to punish anyone. **(4:147)**

Those who deny God and His Messengers, and want to make a distinction between [belief in] God and [belief in] His Messengers, and say: We believe in some but we deny others, and want to pursue a path in-between those, in truth, are unbelievers. We have prepared for unbelievers humiliating suffering. As for those who believe in God and His messengers and make no distinction between any of them—to them He will give their reward. God is indeed Much-Forgiving, Merciful. **(4:150-152)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and

resolve issues).

DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

## Lesson 92(22). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Thinking Independently

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

## Quranic Chapter 4: The Women (al-Nisa)
## Signs 4:153-4:162

Madinah: *The People of the Book ask you that you have sent down to them a Book from heaven. Surely, they had asked Moses for greater than that. Then, they said: Cause us to see God publicly. So a thunderbolt took them for their injustice. Again, they took the calf to themselves after what drew near to them— the clear portents. Even so We pardoned that.*

*And We gave Moses a clear authority.* (4:153)
*And We exalted the mount above them for their solemn promise.*
*And We said to them: Enter the door as ones who prostrate themselves. And We said to them: Disregard not the Sabbath!*
*And We took from them an earnest solemn promise* (4:154)
*for their breaking their solemn promise and their ingratitude for the signs of God and their killing the Prophets without right and their saying: Our hearts are encased. Nay! God set a seal on them for their ingratitude—so they believe not but a few—* (4:155)
*and for their ingratitude and their saying against Mary serious, false charges to harm her reputation* (4:156)
*and for their saying: We killed the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, the Messenger of God. And they killed him not, nor they crucified him. Rather, a likeness to him of another was shown to them. And, truly, those who were at variance in it are in uncertainty about it. There is no knowledge with them about it but they are pursuing an opinion. And they for certain killed him not.* (4:157)
*Nay! God exalted him to Himself.*
*And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (4:158)
*Yet there is none among the People of the Book but will, surely, believe in Jesus before his death.*
*And on the Day of Resurrection*
*he will be a witness against them.* (4:159)
*So for the injustice of those who became Jews,*
*We forbade them what was good that was permitted to them and for their barring many from the way of God* (4:160)
*and for their taking usury—although they were prohibited from it—and for their consuming the wealth of humanity with falsehood.*
*We made ready for the ones who are ungrateful among them a painful punishment.* (4:161)
*But the ones who are firmly rooted in knowledge among them and the ones who believe, they believe in what was caused to descend to you and what was caused to descend before you. They are the ones who perform the formal prayer. And they are the ones who give the purifying alms. They are the ones who believe in God and the Last Day. It is those to whom*
*We will give a sublime compensation.* (4:162)

## COMMENTARY°

Having established this basic principle of the Quranic message with regard to the truth of faith and unfaith, God's Messengers and their messages, the Chapter now refers to the attitudes adopted by some of the ungrateful in Madinah on a number of occasions and how they openly spoke evil. It denounces their attitude towards the

Prophet and his message, particularly their demands asking him to provide them with signs and evidence proving his message. It compares this attitude to the one they adopted towards their own Messenger, Moses, and to their attitude towards Jesus and his mother, Mary.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

## LESSON 92(23). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAIT THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

### QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

*flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

**WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?**

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

*and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:163-4:170

**Madinah:** *Truly, We revealed to you, as We revealed to Noah and the Prophets after him. And We revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon. And We gave David the Psalms.* (4:163)
*And Messengers We related to you before and Messengers We relate to you not.*
*God spoke directly to Moses, speaking directly.* (4:164)
*Messengers are ones who give good tidings and ones who warn so that humanity not be in disputation against God after the Messengers. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (4:165)
*And God bears witness to what He caused to descend to you. He caused it to descend with His knowledge. And the angels also bear witness. And God sufficed as witness.* (4:166)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred others from the way of God, they, surely, went astray, a wandering far astray.* (4:167)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and did wrong, God will never be forgiving of them, nor guide them to a road* (4:168)
*but the road to hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally. And that had been easy for God.* (4:169)
*O humanity! Surely, the Messenger drew near you with The Truth from your Lord. So believe, it is better for you. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God is whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:170)
*O People of the Book! Go not beyond the limits in your way of life and say not about God but The Truth: That the Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was a Messenger of God and His Word that He cast to Mary and a Spirit from Him. So believe in God and His Messengers. And say not: Three. To refrain yourselves from it is better for you. There is only One God. Glory be to Him that He have a son! To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth and God sufficed as a Trustee.* (4:171)

### COMMENTARY°

The Chapter continues its confrontation with the people of earlier revelations, particularly their rejection of the Prophet Muhammad's message and their false claim that God did not send him as a Messenger. It refers to the distinction they tried to draw between mes-

sengers and their arrogant demands for proof of this message in the form of a book sent to him, Muhammad, from heaven. This Chapter states clearly that revelation to a messenger is not something new or strange. Indeed, it is the normal practice with all messengers since the time of Noah to that of Muhammad. All of them have been sent as messengers bringing happy news and delivering strong warnings. This is an aspect of divine mercy bestowed by God on His servants that they may have no argument to justify their disbelief. They have been amply warned before the Day of Judgment. All these messengers were sent for the same aim, and to convey the same message.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 92(24). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO- AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assignment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teach how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions e plicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to app the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Islamic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Islamic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 4: THE WOMEN (AL-NISA)
## SIGNS 4:172-4:176

**Madinah:** *The Messiah will never disdain*
*that he be a servant of God*
*nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him.*

*And whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (4:172)
*Then, as for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, then, He will pay their compensation in full and increase His grace for them. And as for those who disdained and grew arrogant, He will punish them with a painful punishment. They will not find for themselves other than God a protector or a helper.* (4:173)
*O humanity! Surely, there drew near you proof from your Lord. And We caused to descend to you a clear light.* (4:174)
*So for those who believed in God and cleaved firmly to Him, then, He will cause them to enter into mercy from Him and grace and guide them to Himself on a straight path.* (4:175)
*They ask you for advice. Say: God pronounces to you about indirect heirs. If a man perished and he be without children and he has a sister, then, for her is half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she be without children. And if there had been two sisters, then, for them (f), two-thirds of what he left. And if there had been brothers/sisters, men and women, the man will have the like allotment as two females. God makes manifest to you so that you go not astray, and God is Knowing of everything.* (4:176)

### COMMENTARY°

As the Chapter moves to its conclusion, it makes a general cal to all humanity. It tells people that this final message brings its own proof from God and that it is a glorious light which removes all doubt. Those who accept its guidance will receive God's mercy and His grace. They will find themselves guided by this light along a straight path.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

**Outline:** An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details,

and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

**Prove**: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

**Relate**: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

**Review**: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

**State**: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

**Summarize**: When you are asked to summarize or present a summarization, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details, illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

**Trace**: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

**Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?**
Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

**Questions to Generate Various Emotions•**
Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.
Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.
Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

**Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•**
Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?
What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?
Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

## APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

# NOTES

1. Mohammad Hisham Kamali, "Reading the Signs."
2. al-Ghazzali, *Deliverance from Error.*
3. Ali Shariati, *Shariait on Shariati and the Muslim Woman.*
4. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam.*
5. Mohammad Hisham Kamali, "Reading the Signs."

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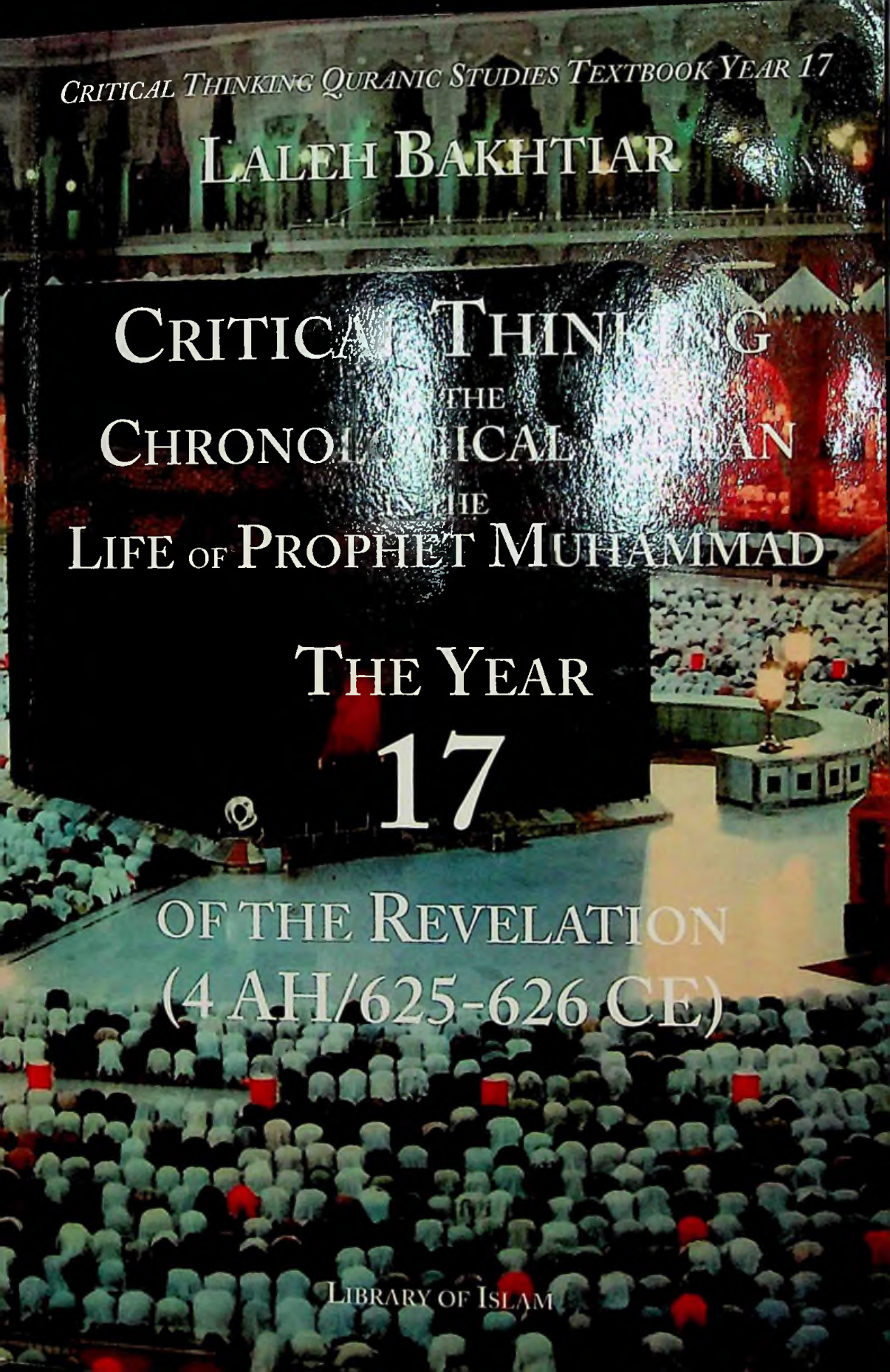
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*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 17*

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking the Chronological Quran the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 17 of the Revelation (4 AH/625-626 CE)



Library of Islam

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 17*

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

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Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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# Year 17 of the Revelation: Madinah

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 17*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 4 AH/ca. June 13, 625 CE-June 1, 626 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

**THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES**

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

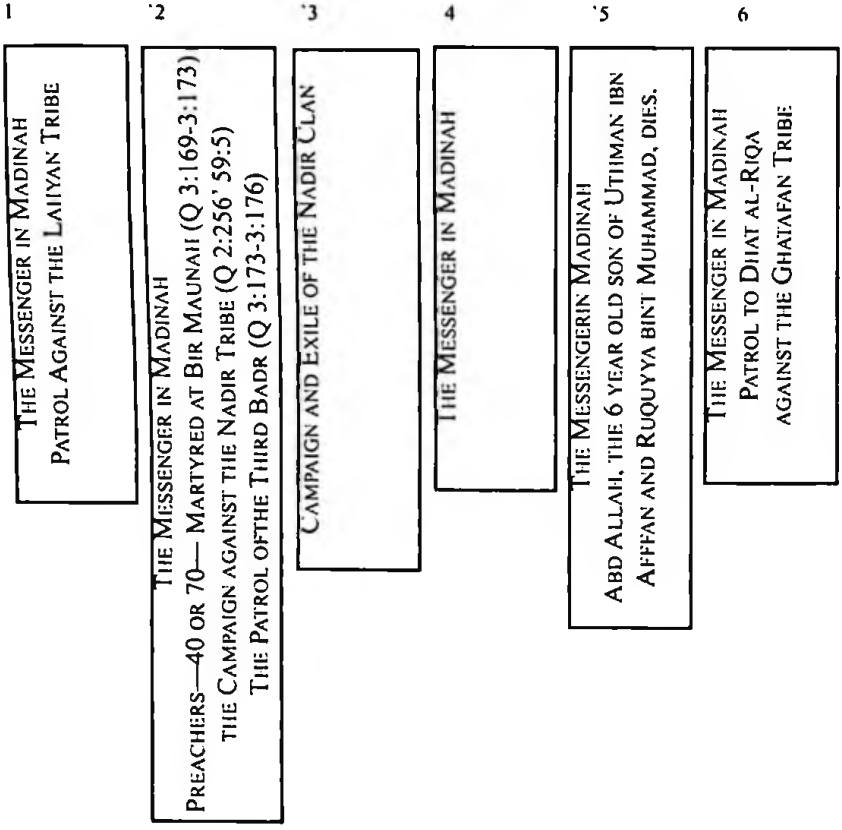
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 17*

## TIMELINE



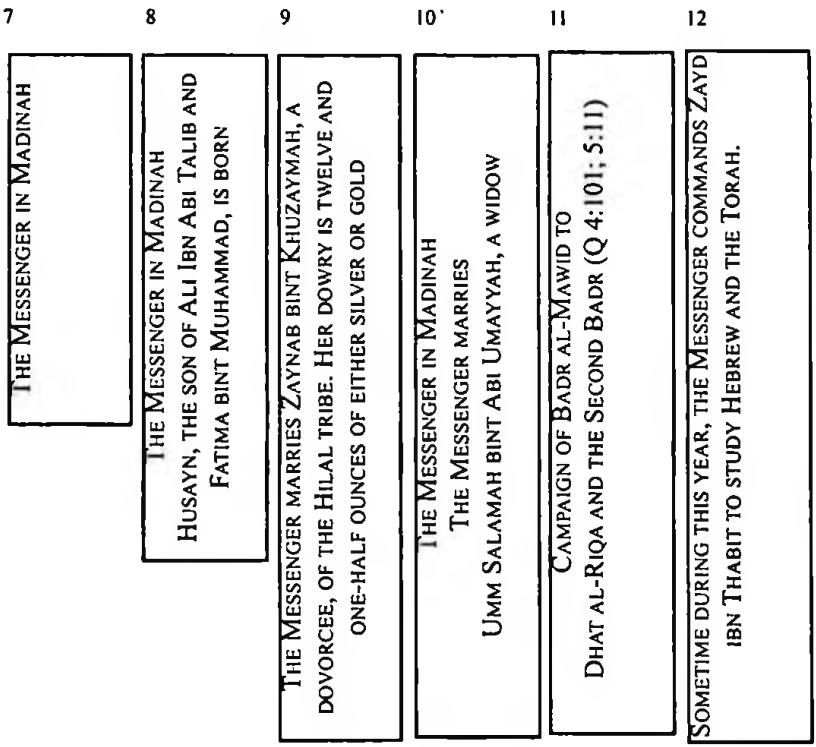

**Key**

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# Preview *Book Year 17*

## Timeline




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

The Lessons in *Book Year 1* through *Book Year 24*, including *Book Year 17* presented here, are numbered consecutively in order of the revelation of a Quranic Chapter. It begins with Lesson 93 and Quranic Chapter 99, the 93rd chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 57, 47, 13, 55, 76, 65, 98 and, finally, Quranic Chapter 59 in Lesson 101.

## LESSON 93. CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 99: THE CONVULSION (AL-ZALZALAH) SIGNS 99:1-99:8

**Madinah:** *When the earth will be convulsed*
*with a convulsion,* (99:1)
*and the earth brought out its ladings* (99:2)
*and the human being said: What is with it?* (99:3)
*On that Day it will divulge its news* (99:4)
*for your Lord revealed it.* (99:5)
*On that Day humanity will issue, separately,*
*that they may be caused to see their actions.* (99:6)
*And whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it.* (99:7)
*And whoever does the weight of an atom*
*of the worst will see it.* (99:8)

### COMMENTARY°

The chapter makes a violent wake-up call to drowsy hearts; the subject matter, scene drawn and rhythm all contributing to the effect of this jolt. It is a powerful blast that makes the earth and all that is

on it quake and tremble. People hardly recover their senses when they find themselves confronted with the reckoning, weighing and evaluating of actions and deeds. They immediately receive their recompense. All this is expressed in just a few short phrases, which is characteristic of this part of the Quran as a whole and forcefully portrayed in this particular chapter.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Here the Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of my own thoughts and feelings.

## LESSON 94(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 57:1-57:10

**Madinah:** *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (57:1)
*To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.*
*He gives life and causes to die.*
*And He is Powerful over everything.* (57:2)
*He is The First and The Last, The One Who is Outward*
*and The One Who is Inward.*
*And He is Knowing of everything.* (57:3)
*It is He Who created the heavens and the earth in six days.*
*Again, He turned His attention to the Throne.*
*He knows what penetrates into the earth and what goes forth from*
*it, and what comes down from the heaven and what goes up to it.*
*And He is with you wherever you had been.*
*And God is Seeing of what you do.* (57:4)
*To Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.*
*All commands are returned to God.* (57:5)
*He causes the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime and*
*causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime.*
*And He is Knowing of whatever is in the breasts.* (57:6)
*Believe in God and His Messenger and spend out of what He made*
*you ones who are successors in it. Those among you who believed*
*and spent, for them is a great compensation.* (57:7)
*And what is the matter with you that you believe not in God*
*while the Messenger calls to you to believe in your Lord?*
*And He took your solemn promise,*

*if you had been ones who believe.* (57:8)
*It is He Who sends down to His servant clear portents, signs,*
*that He brings you out from the shadows into the light.*
*And, truly, God is to you Gentle, Compassionate.* (57:9)
*And what is the matter with you*
*that you spend not in the way of God?*
*And to God belongs the heritage of the heavens and the earth?*
*Not on the same level among you are whoever spent before the victory and fought. Those are more sublime in degree than those who spent afterwards and fought.*
*And God promised the fairer to all.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (57:10)

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter, in its totality, is an address to the Muslim community, calling upon it to fulfil faith within its own society. The community should become an embodiment of the truth of faith, enabling hearts to become so dedicated that they are ready to sacrifice all, life and property, feelings and emotions, for it. With this truth, human souls are elevated to a divine level while they still live on earth. Thus, their standards are those that God has established, and their values are those that are given weight on God s scales. This truth enables hearts to feel the presence of God, to humble themselves when He is mentioned and to discard everything that may hinder them from turning to Him in complete dedication. On the basis of this truth of faith, the chapter calls upon the Muslim community to sacrifice life and property for God s cause: (57:7-57:10)

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates in many places that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All humans waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in traffic—though I could have left a half hour earlier and avoided the rush).
Sometimes Ie worry unproductively.
Sometimes I spend time regretting what is past.
Sometimes I just stare off blankly into space.

## LESSON 94(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID) SIGNS 57:11-57:19

**Madinah:** *Who is he who will lend to God a fairer loan*
*that He multiply it for him*
*and he will have a generous compensation?* (57:11)
*On a Day you will see the males, ones who believe*
*and the females, ones who believe, their light coming eagerly in*
*advance of them and on their right: Good tidings for you this Day,*
*Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them*
*forever. That, it is the winning the sublime triumph!* (57:12)
*On a Day the males will say, ones who are hypocrites and females,*
*the ones who are hypocrites, to those who believed:*
*Wait for us that we will borrow from your light.*
*It will be said: Return behind and search out for a light.*
*There would be a fence between them for which there is a door.*
*That which is inward is mercy and that which is outward*
*is towards the punishment.* (57:13
*The hypocrites will cry out to the believers:*
*Have we not been with you?*
*They will say: Yea! And you let yourselves be tempted*
*and you awaited and you were in doubt and you were deluded by*
*following your fantasies until the command of God drew near and*
*the deluder deluded you in regard to God.* (57:14)
*So this Day ransom will not be taken from you nor from those who*
*were ungrateful. Your place of shelter will be the fire.*
*It is your defender.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (57:15)
*Is it not time for those who believed that their hearts be humbled*
*by the Remembrance of God and to The Truth that came down to*
*them and that they not be like those*

*who were given the Book before?*
*Then, the space of time was long for them so their hearts became*
*hard. And many of them were ones who disobey.* (57:16)
*Know you that God gives life to the earth after its death.*
*Surely, We made manifest the signs to you so that perhaps*
*you will be reasonable.* (57:17)
*Truly, the males, ones who are charitable and the females,*
*ones who are charitable and who lent a fairer loan to God,*
*it will be multiplied for them*
*and for them there is a generous compensation.* (57:18)
*And those who believed in God and His Messengers,*
*those, they are the just persons.*
*And the witnesses to their Lord.*
*For them is their compensation and their light.*
*And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,*
*those are the Companions of Hellfire.* (57:19)

### COMMENTARY°

The chapter goes a stage further in motivating addressees to be true believers and to make financial sacrifices. It provides further incentives and inspiration: (57:11-57:19) This address is not merely inspiring; it is captivating. This part continues with the main theme of the chapter, fulfilment of the true meaning of faith in people's hearts so that they come forward with financial sacrifice purely for God's sake. It includes inspiring touches similar to those found in the first part. It begins with a note of remonstration addressed to the believers who had not at that time attained the standard God wanted them to attain. It puts before them the situation of communities from among the people of earlier revelations whose hearts had hardened as time went by and, as a result, transgressed. The believers are warned against ending up in the same position, but a pleasant prospect is also put before them, telling them that God gives hearts a fresh life in the same way as He restores life to the earth after it has been lifeless. Then we take a look at the next world. This is coupled with a repeat call to offer a generous loan to God, one that promises multiple repayment and a generous reward. This, thus, mirrors what was stated in the first part of the chapter.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary**

(concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

## LESSON 94(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 57:20-57:25

**Madinah:** *Know that this present life is only a pastime, a diversion*
*and an adornment and a mutual boasting among you*
*and a rivalry in respect to wealth and children*
*as the likeness of plenteous rain water.*
*The plants impressed ones who are ungrateful.*
*Again, it withers; then, you have seen it yellowing.*
*Again, it becomes chaff while in the world to come there is severe*
*punishment and forgiveness from God and contentment.*
*And this present life is nothing but a delusion of enjoyment.* (57:20)
*Move quickly towards forgiveness from your Lord and the Garden*
*whose depth is as the breadth of the heavens and earth.*
*It was prepared for those who believed in God*
*and His Messengers. That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom*
*He wills. And God is The Possessor of the Sublime Grace.* (57:21)
*And no affliction lit on the earth nor on yourselves*
*but it is in a Book that We fashion before.*
*Truly, that is easy for God,* (57:22)
*so that you not grieve over what slipped away from you*
*nor be glad because of what was given to you.*
*And God loves not any proud, boaster,* (57:23)
*those who are misers and who command humanity to miserliness,*
*and whoever turns away then, God,*
*He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* (57:24)
*Certainly, We sent Our Messengers with the clear portents*
*and We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance*
*so that humanity may uphold equity.*
*And We caused iron to descend in which is vigorous might*
*and profits for humanity that perhaps God would know*
*whoever helps Him and His Messengers in the unseen.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (57:25)

## COMMENTARY°

The comments on this call reach to a high standard of faith and the sacrifice of life and property. It shows the life of this world to be too trivial to have any value for people who aspire to heaven. Know that the life of this world is but a play, a passing delight, a beautiful show, a cause of boasting among you and a quest for more riches and children. It is like the rain that causes the plants to grow, and thus gives delight to the sowers. Then it withers, and you can see it turn yellow, and in the end it crumbles into dust. In the life to come there is terrible suffering, as well as God's forgiveness and His goodly acceptance. The life of this world is no more than an illusory pleasure. **(57:20)**

The chapter calls the believers to compete in the proper field for the one and only worthwhile prize that will define their permanent status in the everlasting world: Vie with one another in seeking to attain your Lord's forgiveness, and a paradise as vast as the heavens and the earth, prepared for those who believe in God and His messengers. Such is God's bounty which He grants to whomever He pleases, God's bounty is great indeed. **(57:21)**

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The chapter now adds a profound note about God's will, which will always be done: **(57:22-57:24)**

The next part of the chapter briefly outlines the history of the divine message, starting with Noah and Abraham. It states its aims and objectives in peoples lives, referring briefly to the conditions of the people of earlier revelations, particularly those who followed Jesus: We sent Our Messengers with clear evidence of the truth, and through them We bestowed the book from on high, setting the bal-

ance, so that people could uphold justice. We have also sent down iron, with its mighty strength and diverse uses for mankind. Thus God may mark out those who would stand up for Him and His Messengers, even though He is beyond the reach of human perception. God is indeed powerful, almighty. **(57:25)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

## LESSON 94(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs* ... which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

GUIDE: When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 57: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 57:26-57:29

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, We sent Noah and Abraham*
*and We assigned to their offspring prophethood and the Book.*
*And of them are ones who are truly guided*
*while many of them are ones who disobey.* (57:26)
*Again, We sent Our Messengers following their footsteps.*
*And We sent following them Jesus son of Mary.*
*And We gave him the Gospel.*
*And We assigned in the hearts of those who followed him,*
*tenderness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they made it up*
*themselves. We prescribed it not for them but they were so looking*
*for the contentment of God. Then, they gave it not the attention*
*giving its right attention so We gave those who believed*
*among them their compensation.*

*And many of them are ones who disobey.* (57:27)
*O those who believed! Be God-conscious*
*and believe in His Messenger.*
*He will give you a double like part of His mercy.*
*And He assigns you a light to walk by.*
*And He will forgive you.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (57:28)
*Certainly, the People of the Book know that they have no power*
*over anything of the grace of God and that the grace of God*
*is in the hand of God. He gives it to whomever He wills.*
*And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace.* (57:29)

### COMMENTARY°

The chapter concludes with this address to the believers that is full of encouragement to compete for the great prize of God s mercy and heaven. It is a fitting conclusion to a chapter that repeatedly calls on believers to fulfil the requirements of their faith, humble themselves before God and make the necessary sacrifices of self and property, in complete dedication to Him.

In conclusion, we say that this chapter is a clear example of the Quranic method of addressing human hearts in a profound and effective way. In its opening, flow and conclusion, in its music, images and connotations, in its handling of its subject matter and how it develops it stage after stage, the chapter provides a highly effective lesson to advocates of the divine message. It teaches them how to address people and how to bring human nature and hearts alive. It is a lesson taught by the Maker of hearts, the author of the Quran, and the Creator of everything in due measure. It is from this school that successful advocates of God's message graduate.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

QURANIC SIGN 2:260

*When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and*

*twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

QUESTIONS 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

## LESSON 95(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of Islam. Islam, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[12]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 47: MUHAMMAD

## SIGNS 47:1-47:11

**Madinah:** *Those who were ungrateful and who barred from the way of God—He caused their actions to go astray.* (47:1)
*And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality and believed in what was sent down to Muhammad—for it is The Truth from their Lord—He will absolve them of their evil deeds and will make right their state of mind.* (47:2)
*That is because those who were ungrateful followed falsehood, while those who believed followed The Truth from their Lord. Thus, God propounds for humanity their parables.* (47:3)
*So when you met those who were ungrateful, then, strike their thick necks until you gave them a sound thrashing.*
*Then, tie them fast with restraints.*
*And afterwards either have good will towards them or take ransom for them until the war ends, laying down its heavy load. Thus, it is so!*
*But if God willed, He Himself would have, certainly, avenged you.*

*But it is to try some of you with some others.*
*As for those who were slain in the way of God, He will never cause*
*their actions to go astray.* (47:4)
*He will guide them and He will make right*
*their state of mind.* (47:5)
*And He will cause them to enter the Garden*
*with which He acquainted them.* (47:6)
*O those who believed! If you help God, He will help you*
*and make firm your feet.* (47:7)
*As for those who are ungrateful, for them is falling into ruin!*
*And He caused their actions to go astray.* (47:8)
*That is because they disliked what God caused to descend*
*so He caused their actions to fail.* (47:9)
*Journey they not through the earth and look on how had been the*
*Ultimate End of those who were before them? God destroyed them.*
*And for ones who are ungrateful is its likeness.* (47:10)
*That is because God is the Defender of those who believed.*
*And for the ones who are ungrateful,*
*there is no defender of them.* (47:11)

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter, Muhammad, was revealed in Madinah. It also goes by another name, *al-Qital*, meaning 'fighting'. This secondary title is very apt because fighting is the chapter's subject matter providing most of its images and giving it its distinctive beat. It begins with an explanation of the true nature of both the ungrateful and the believers which takes the form of a moral attack on the former and a monologue of praise of the latter. The clear implication is that God is the enemy of the ungrateful and the protector of those who have faith. Furthermore, this is a true fact in God s sight. Thus, the opening of the chapter serves as a declaration of war by God against His enemies who are hostile to His faith: **(47:1-47:3)**

Once this declaration of war against the ungrateful is made, an express, resounding order is given to the believers to join this war against them. This order is followed by an outline of the rules that apply to captives of war once the bloody battle is over: **(47:4)** Added to this order is an explanation about the purpose of fighting and encouragement to the believers to join with it and do well, and a promise of honor for those who fall as martyrs. A further promise of help is given to those who join the fighting in support of God s cause, with an added rejoinder making clear that the unbelievers will be destroyed and their deeds will come to nothing: **(47:4-47:11)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

## LESSON 95(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 47:12-47:19

**Madinah:** *Truly, God will cause to enter those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*gardens beneath which rivers run.*
*While those who were ungrateful, take joy in eating*
*as the flocks eat,*
*the fire will be the place of lodging for them.* (47:12)
*And how many a town had there been which was stronger in*
*strength than thy town which drove thee out, that We have caused*
*to perish? And there was no one who helps them!* (47:13)
*Is he who had been on a clear portent from his Lord like him*
*for whom was made to appear pleasing his dire actions*
*and they followed their own desires?* (47:14)
*This is the parable of the Garden*
*which was promised the ones who are God-conscious:*
*In it are rivers of unpolluted water and rivers of milk,*
*the taste of which is not modified and rivers of intoxicants*
*delightful to ones who drink and rivers of clarified honey,*
*and in it for them all kinds of fruits and forgiveness*
*from their Lord.*
*Is this like ones who will dwell forever in the fire*
*and they were given scalding water to drink*
*so that it cuts off their bowels?* (47:15)
*And among them are some who listen to you*

*until when they went forth from **you**.*
*They said to those who were given the knowledge:*
*What was that he said just now?*
*Those are those upon whose hearts God set a seal.*
*And they followed their own desires.* (47:16)
*And those who were truly guided, He increased them in guidance*
*and He gave to them their God-consciousness.* (47:17)
*Look they, then, on not but the Hour,*
*that it approach them suddenly?*
*Certainly, its tokens drew near. Then, what will it be like for them*
*when their reminder drew near to them?* (47:18)
*So know **you** that there is no god but God and ask forgiveness*
*for thy impieties and also for the males, ones who believe and the*
*females, ones who believe, and God knows your place of turmoil*
*and your place of lodging.* (47:19)

### COMMENTARY°

Having opened with such a strong attack on the ungrateful, the chapter adds a varied discourse on faith, describing the states of the believers and the ungrateful both in this world and in the life to come. It distinguishes between a believer's enjoyment of goodly things and the way the ungrateful enjoy the pleasures of this world in a way that does not differ from that of cattle: **(47:12)** It describes what the believers will drink in heaven, variously pure water, milk with unaltered taste, delightful wine and pure, clarified honey. These drinks are so plentiful that they flow like rivers. Moreover, they have plenty of every type of fruit, together with God s forgiveness and His being pleased with them. A rhetorical question is then added: **(47:15)**

This first round in the ever-raging battle between the believers and the ungrateful over, the chapter starts another round with the hypocrites who, together with other groups in Madinah, represented a danger to the Muslim community.

References to the hypocrites are made in the same confrontational and fighting manner as the rest of the chapter. This is noticeable right from their first mention, which describes how they are absent minded when they sit with the Prophet and its comment that describes them as being far astray, following their desires: **(47:16)**

They are warned that the Last Hour will inevitably come, and, then, they will not even be able to take heed: **(47:18)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

*And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance* ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

## LESSON 95(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Hence I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would

not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible **fashion.**[15]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 47:20-47:28

**Madinah:** *And those who believed say:*
*Why was a chapter of the Quran*
*not caused to descend?*
*But when was caused to descend a definitive chapter of the Quran*
*and fighting was remembered in it, **you** had seen those who in their*
*hearts is a sickness looking on **you***
*with the look of one who is fainting at death.* (47:20)
*But better for them would be obedience and an honorable saying!*
*And when the affair was resolved, then,*
*if they were sincere to God,*
*it would have been better for them.* (47:21)
*Will it be that if you turned away, you would make corruption in*
*the earth and cut off your ties with blood relations?* (47:22)
*Those are those whom God cursed,*
*so He made them unwilling to hear*
*and their sight, unwilling to see.* (47:23)
*Meditate they not, then, on the Quran*
*or are there locks on their hearts?* (47:24)
*Truly, those who went back—turn their back— after the guidance*
*became clear to them, it was Satan who enticed them*
*and He granted them indulgence.* (47:25)
*That is because they said to those who disliked*
*what God sent down: We will obey you in some of the affair.*
*And God knows what they keep secret.* (47:26)
*Then, how will it be for them when the angels will call them to*
*themselves, striking their faces and their backs?* (47:27)

*That is because they followed what displeased God*
*and they disliked His contentment*
*so He caused their actions to fail.* (47:28)

### COMMENTARY°

The chapter then describes their panic when they are confronted with an express Quranic order to fight. They have pretended to be believers, and here we see how the chapter makes abundantly clear the difference between them and true believers: **(47:20)** While they are urged to obey God and His Messenger and to be truthful and firm, the chapter condemns their behavior and declares war against them. They are expelled from God s mercy: **(47:20-23)** The hypocrites' schemes are exposed: they listen to Satan and befriend the Jews and conspire with them against the believers. Therefore, they are warned about torture that would be inflicted on them at the point of death. They are also warned about exposure within the Muslim community to which they pretend to belong when they are not really part of it. On the contrary, they scheme against it: **(47:25-47:28)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication**(s)?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distin-

guishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

## LESSON 95(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Critical thinkers are questioners. The ability to question and probe deeply, to get down to root ideas, to get beneath the mere appearance of things, is at the very heart of this strategy. Furthermore, critical thinkers are comfortable being questioned. They actually welcome questions. They don't become offended, confused, or intimidated. They welcome good questions as an opportunity to develop a line of thought.

There are many different kinds of questions and moves available to you. Your teacher can use questioning techniques to learn what you and your classmates think, helping you develop your ideas, or as a prelude to evaluation. When confronted with a new idea, you want to understand it, to relate it to your experience, and to determine its implications, consequences, and value. You can fruitfully uncover the structure of your own and others' perspectives. Probing questions are the tools by which these goals are reached.

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 47: IRON (AL-HADID)
## SIGNS 47:29-47:38

**Madinah:** *Or assumed those who in their hearts is a sickness*
*that God will never bring out their rancor?* (47:29)
*If We will, We would have caused thee to see them.*
*You would have recognized them by their mark.*
*But, certainly, you will recognize them by the twisting of sayings.*
*And God knows all your actions.* (47:30)
*And, certainly, We will try you until We know the ones who struggle*
*among you and the ones who remain steadfast*
*and We will try your reports.* (47:31)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God*
*and made a breach with the Messenger*
*after guidance became clear to them,*
*they never hurt or profit God at all,*
*but He will cause their actions to fail.* (47:32)
*O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger*
*and render not your actions untrue.* (47:33)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and barred from the way of God,*
*again, they died while they were ones who are ungrateful,*

*then, God will never forgive them.* (47:34)
*So be not faint and call for peace while you have the upper hand.*
*God is with you*
*and He will never cheat you out of your actions.* (47:35)
*This present life is only a pastime and a diversion.*
*But if you believe and are God-conscious,*
*He will give you your compensation*
*and will not ask of you for your property.* (47:36)
*When He asks it of you and, then, urges persistently, you would be*
*a miser and He will bring out your rancor.* (47:37)
*Lo and behold! These are being called to spend in the way of God,*
*yet among you are some who are misers. And whoever is miser,*
*then, he is a miser only to himself. God is Sufficient and you are*
*poor. And if you turn away, He will have a folk other than you in*
*exchange. Again, they will not be the like of you.* (47:38)

### COMMENTARY°

The chapter's third and final round again takes up the attack against the ungrateful from among the Quraysh and the Jews: **(47:29-47:32)** It warns the believers against falling into the same traps as their enemies: **(47:33-47:34)** They are encouraged to remain firm during the fight: **(47:35)**

The life of this world is shown to be trivial. Believers are urged to spend some of their money to support God's cause. They are not meant to give away all they have; God knows their human nature and that they would find it too difficult to make such a sacrifice should it be asked of them: **(47:36-47:37)** The chapter concludes with a note of warning to the Muslims, should they be niggardly, unwilling to spend some of their money for Gods cause: **(47:38)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret**

the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)?**
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View?**

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

## LESSON 96(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D) SIGNS 13:1-13:7

**Madinah:** *Alif Lam Mim Ra.*
*That are the signs of the Book,*
*and what were caused to descend to* ***you***
*from* ***your*** *Lord is The Truth,*
*except most of humanity believes not.* (13:1)
*It is He Who exalted the heavens without any pillars so that you*
*see them. Again, He turned his attention to above the Throne.*
*And He caused to become subservient the sun and the moon,*
*each run for a term, that which is determined.*
*He manages the command.*
*He explains distinctly the signs*
*so that perhaps of the meeting with your Lord*
*you would be certain.* (13:2)
*And it is He Who stretched out the earth and made on it firm*
*mountains and rivers. And with all kinds of fruits,*
*he made in it two, a pair.*
*He covers the nighttime with the daytime.*
*Truly, in that are signs for a folk who reflect.* (13:3)
*And in the earth there are strips, that which neighbor one another*
*and gardens of grapevines and plowed lands and date palm trees*
*coming from the same root and not coming from the same root that*
*are given to drink from one water. And We give advantage to some*
*of them over some others in produce.*

*Truly, in these things there are signs*
*for a folk who are reasonable.* (13:4)
*And if you have marveled, then, wonder at their saying:*
*When we had been earth dust, will we, truly, be in a new creation?*
*And those are those who were ungrateful to their Lord.*
*Those will have yokes around their necks.*
*And those will be the Companions of the Fire.*
*They, ones who will dwell in it forever.* (13:5)
*And they seek you to hasten on evil deeds before the benevolence.*
*And, surely, passed away before them exemplary punishments.*
*But, truly, thy Lord is certainly, The Possessor of Forgiveness for*
*humanity in spite of their injustice.*
*And, truly, thy Lord is Severe in repayment.* (13:6)
*And those who were ungrateful say:*
*Why was a sign not caused to descend to him from his Lord?*
*You are only one who warns, and one who guides every folk.* (13:7)

## COMMENTARY°

The present chapter is a remarkable one, maintaining the same rhythm and giving the same ambience from start to finish. The Quranic musical rhythm uses a variety of elements, including harmony between the place and manner of articulation of individual sounds within a single word, sound harmony in each sentence or clause, the type of long vowels chosen, and the long vowels and the consonants used in the final words of each sign. All the elements of rhythm used in this chapter are consistent throughout, except for the long vowels and consonants in the final words of its verses. We note that the first five signs use words with an non (*fin*) ending. The rest of the chapter uses a long a (*ā*) followed by a plosive, or semi-plosive consonant, such as aab (*āb*), aad (*ād*), aal (*āl*), aar (*ār*) with our hearts to wider worlds, times and horizons, keeping us fully aware, understanding everything we see and hear. Nevertheless, it presents us with a multitude of images, feelings and thoughts that fill our imagination and address our hearts and souls in every possible way. With its brilliant light and endless meanings, it travels

What we have here is not words and sentences; rather, a strong, hammering rhythm pervades the entire chapter, permeating its images, meanings, and finer touches. The chapter opens with a basic issue of faith, namely the revelation of God's book, the Quran, and the truth it contains. This formulates the foundation over which all the other issues of faith are built, including those of the Oneness of God, belief in the hereafter, and the need to do good in this life. All these branch out from the central point of believing that the One who

gives all orders is God, and that the Quran is His revelation to the Prophet Muhammad.

The chapter then moves on to wonder at these people who are unable to see all the signs in the universe, each of which is a miracle on its own. They ask the Prophet for a miraculous sign. But what will they do with such a sign when the universe around them is full of signs pointing to the Creator. (13:7) They demand a miracle when miracles are neither of the Prophet's own making nor part of his business. It is God who decides, in His wisdom, whether it is necessary.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

## LESSON 96(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## QURANIC CHAPTER: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
## SIGNS 13:8-13:18

**Madinah:** *God knows what every female carries*
*and how much her womb absorbs*
*and what they add.*
*And everything with Him is in proportion.* (13:8)
*He is One Who Knows the unseen and the visible,*
*The Great, The One Who is Raised High.* (13:9)
*It is equal to Him whether you kept secret his saying*
*or you published it.*
*Or whoever he be, one who conceals himself by nighttime*
*or one who goes about carelessly in the daytime.* (13:10)
*For him there are Ones Who Postpone from before him*
*and from behind him to keep him safe by the command of God.*
*Truly, God alters not a folk*
*until they alter what is within themselves.*
*And when God wanted evil for a folk, then,*
*there is no turning it back. And there is not for them*
*other than He anyone who is a safeguarder.* (13:11)
*It is He Who causes you to see the lightning in fear and in hope.*
*And it is He Who causes the clouds to grow heavy,* (13:12)
*and thunder glorifies His praise and the angels,*
*because of their awe of Him.*
*And He sends thunderbolts and He lights on whom He wills.*
*And they dispute about God, and He is a Severe Force.* (13:13)

*For Him is the call of The Truth. And those whom they call to other than Him, they respond not to them at all, but like one who stretches out the palms of his hands for water so that it should reach his mouth, but it is not that which reaches it. And supplication of the ones who are ungrateful is only wandering astray.* (13:14)

*And to God prostrates whatever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly as does their shade at the first part of the day and the eventide.* (13:15)

*Say: Who is the Lord of the heavens and the earth? Say: God!*
*Say: Took you to yourselves other than Him protectors? They control not themselves, neither profiting nor hurting.*
*Say: Are the unwilling to see on the same level as the seeing? Are the shadows on the same level as the light? Made they ascribed associates with God who created as His creation so that creation resembled one another to them? Say: God is One Who is Creator of everything. And He is The One, The Omniscient.* (13:16)

*He caused water to descend from heaven and it flowed into valleys according to their measure. Then, the flood bears away the froth. And from what they kindle in a fire, looking for glitter or sustenance, there is a froth the like of it. Thus, God compares The Truth and falsehood. Then, as for the froth, it goes as swelling scum while what profits humanity abides on the earth. Thus, God propounds parables.* (13:17)

*For those who responded to their Lord there is the fairer. And for those who respond not to Him, if they had all that is in and on the earth and its like with it, they would offer it as ransom. Those, for them will be a dire reckoning and their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the cradling!* (13:18)

## COMMENTARY°

Now the chapter enters a totally different realm, that of human souls and feelings and other creatures. God knows what every female bears, and by how much the wombs may fall short [in gestation], and by how much they may increase. With Him everything has its definite measure. He knows all that lies beyond the reach of human perception and all that anyone may witness. He is the Greater, the Almighty. It is all alike [to Him] whether any of you speaks in secret or aloud, whether he seeks to hide under the cover of the night or

walks openly in the light of day. Each has guardian angels before him and behind him, who watch him by God's command. Indeed God does not change a people's conditions unless they first change what is in their hearts. When God wills people to suffer some misfortune, none can avert it. Besides Him, they have none to protect them. **(13:8-13:11)**

The chapter now takes us on another round to a different but related stage. Here we see natural scenes and human feelings mixed in a perfect harmony of picture and effect. The whole image casts an atmosphere of awe, apprehension, expectation and appeal. We are on our guard as we watch, and the verses here produce a profound effect on us: **(13:12-13:16)**

The chapter moves on to give an example of truth and falsehood, the prayer that is fulfilled and the one that goes with the wind, of quiet goodness and boasting evil. The example provided depicts an aspect of God's power and His elaborate planning of creation: **(13:17)**

Whoever responds to Him will have a fine reward, and whoever turns away will face great suffering. So much so that the latter will want to offer the earth's riches twice over, in order to release himself. But there is no chance of release. There is only an awful reckoning and a fitting abode in hell: **(13:18)**

Here again the contrast is clear between those who respond to their Lord and those who do not. Between the rich reward and the awful reckoning, hell and its painful abode. This follows the same pattern of the chapter in providing one contrasting image after another.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

## LESSON 96(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEEP QUESTIONING

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
## SIGNS 13:19-13:26

**Madinah:** *Then, is he who knows what was caused to descend to*
***you** from **your** Lord to be The Truth*
*like he who is unwilling to see?*
*It is only those imbued with intuition who recollect.* (13:19)
*Those who live up to their compact with God*
*and break not their solemn promise* (13:20)
*and those who reach out to what God commanded be joined*
*and dread their Lord and they fear the dire reckoning* (13:21)
*and those who endured patiently,*
*looking for the Countenance of their Lord*
*and who performed the formal prayer*
*and spent out of what We have provided them*
*in secret and in public,*
*and they drive off the evil deed with benevolence—*
*those, for them is the Ultimate Abode:* (13:22)
*Gardens of Eden which they will enter along with whoever*
*was in accord with morality from among their fathers*
*and their spouses and their offspring.*
*And angels will enter to them from every door saying:* (13:23)
*Peace be to you for what you endured patiently.*
*How excellent is the Ultimate Abode!* (13:24)
*But those who break the compact of God after its solemn promise*
*and sever what God commanded to be joined and make corruption*
*in and on the earth, those, for them is the curse*
*and for them is the Dire Abode.* (13:25)
*God extends the provision for whom He wills and measures it.*
*They were glad in this present life. And there is nothing in this*
*present life like the world to come but a brief enjoyment.* (13:26)

## COMMENTARY°

Great scenes drawn from the vast universe and the world beyond, as well as the depths of the human soul were presented in the first half of the chapter. Now, this second half adds a fine rationality that deals with the great issues of revelation and the divine message, God's Oneness, the pagans attributing partners to Him, as well as their demand for miracles and their hastening of God's punishment.

This new phase opens with a demonstration of the natures of belief and denial of the truth. The former is evidence of true knowledge, while the latter is blindness. Another touch delineates the nature of believers and ungrateful, and the distinctive qualities of both. This is followed by a scene of the Day of Judgment and the bliss it brings to the former and suffering to the latter. We then have a description of plentiful and stinted provisions as determined by God. Then follows an image of believing hearts gaining reassurance through remembrance of God. Then we move to a description of the Quran which almost makes mountains move, or the earth split apart, or the dead speak. A further image touches on the calamities that befall unbelievers or which strike a short distance from their quarters. This is followed by a sarcastic remark directed at the unbelievers' false gods. Mention is then made of the doom of past communities so as to rid the earth of them time after time. The closing part contains a stern warning to those who deny the message of the Prophet Muhammad threatening to leave them to their inevitable doom. All this shows that the strong beat we encountered in the first half of the chapter now prepares us for a close look at the issues raised. Our minds are open to receive these issues and accept the message of the chapter. The two parts are mutually complementary, although each has its special effects, all of which serve one issue and promote the same goal.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?

3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

## LESSON 96(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

**OW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

## QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)
## SIGNS 13:27-13:31

**Madinah:** *And those who were ungrateful say:*
*Why was a sign not caused to descend to him from his Lord?*
*Say: Truly, God causes to go astray whom He wills*
*and guides to Himself whomever was penitent,* (13:27)
*those who believed and their hearts are at rest*
*in the remembrance of God,*
*no doubt in the remembrance of God hearts are at rest.* (13:28)

*Those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*there is joy for them and a goodness of destination.* (13:29)
*Thus, We sent you to a community.*
*Surely, passed away other communities before it*
*so that you would recount to them what We revealed to you*
*and they are ungrateful to The Merciful.*
*Say: He is my Lord. There is no god but He.*
*In Him I put my trust and to Him*
*I am turning in repentance.* (13:30)
*If there were a Recitation that would have set mountains in motion with it, or the earth would be cut off with it or the dead would be spoken to with it, nay! The command is altogether with God. Do those who believed not have knowledge that if God wills He would have guided humanity altogether. Will disaster cease not to light on*
*those who were ungrateful*
*because of what they crafted?*
*Or will it alight close to their abode*
*until the promise of God approaches?*
*Truly, God breaks not His solemn declaration.* (13:31)

## COMMENTARY°

The answer to the demand of the ungrateful asking for miracles is that miracles are not what lead people to believe. Faith has its solid foundation within the human soul. There are causes that lead to it, but these have to originate within the soul: **(13:27)** It is their turning to Him which makes them worthy of His guidance. It is clearly understood that those who do not turn to God are those who deserve to be left to go astray. This is indeed what happens to them. What matters, then, is one's own heart and its being ready to receive God's guidance. If so, it seeks it and appeals to God for it. Hearts which do not make any positive move to seek God's guidance remain far removed from it.

This is followed by an image of believing hearts which enjoy a congenial atmosphere of reassurance, happiness and peace: **(13:28)** They find comfort in their feeling that their bond with God is a real one, and that they are close to Him, secure with His support.

Such comfort **(13:28)** is a profound reality in the hearts of believers who deeply and truly feel the meaning of faith. They have a bond with God which they recognize. They cannot express the meaning of such a bond in words.

In life we often experience moments which none can withstand unless we are certain of God's support and protection, regardless of whatever resources of fortitude, perseverance and power may be at

our command. There are moments in life that render all that useless. But such moments can be faced easily by those who find their comfort in God: **(13:28)**

Those who turn to God are reassured when they remember Him, and find fine welcome when they return to Him. This is the same as the outcome of their turning to Him in this life presenting their good deeds: **(13:29)** The Arabic term, ṭūbā, which is used here for 'happiness' is chosen for its added connotations of greatness. Hence, their happiness is great, unending.

Conversely, those who demand a sign are those who have deprived themselves of the contentment, comfort and happiness of faith. They live in worry, and it is this anxiety that makes them demand miracles and signs. The chapter then tells the Prophet that he is not the first messenger to preach the divine message to his people. This means that they should not find the matter too strange. Before them there were numerous communities and many messengers. If they persist with their rejection of the divine faith, you, the Prophet, should continue to follow your own way, putting your trust in God alone: **(13:30)**

What is extremely odd is that they refuse to believe in God, the Most Gracious, in the remembrance of whose mercy people find inner comfort and contentedness. God's Messenger is being told that all his task requires is that he read to them what God has revealed to him. This is the purpose for which God has given him this message. If they persist in rejecting it, he has to make it clear to them that he places his trust in God alone, and that he turns to Him, seeking help from no one else.

The task the Prophet is sent to accomplish is to recite this remarkable Quran to them. Had there been a divine writ with which mountains move, or the earth split asunder, or the dead made to speak, this Quran would have had the necessary characteristics to achieve such supernatural phenomena. But this Quran is meant to address the living who are accountable for their deeds. If they will not respond, then the believers may despair of their ever turning to God and submitting to Him. They should leave them alone until God's threat to the unbelievers has come true: **(13:31)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experi-

ences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What is the clear evidence that has drawn near us from our Lord according to the Quranic signs here? Analyze verses 13:31-13:32 as to information, interpretation, concepts, assumptions and implications.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.

## LESSON 96(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)

### SIGNS 13:32-13:37

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, Messengers were ridiculed before you,*
*but I granted indulgence to those who were ungrateful.*
*Again, I took them. How had been My repayment!* (13:32)
*Is He, then, One Who Sustains Every Soul for what it earned?*
*And yet they ascribe associates with God!*
*Say: Name them! Or will you tell Him*
*of what He knows not in the earth?*
*Or name you only them in the manifest sayings?*
*Nay! Made to appear pleasing to those who were ungrateful was*
*their planning and they were barred from the way.*
*And whomever God causes to go astray,*
*for him there is no one who guides.* (13:33)
*For them is a punishment in this present life*
*and, certainly, punishment in the world to come*
*will be one that presses hard.*
*And for them is no one who is a defender against God.* (13:34)
*A parable of the Garden which was promised*
*to the ones who are God-conscious;*
*beneath it rivers run.*
*Its produce is one that continues as is its shade.*
*That is the Ultimate End of those who were God-conscious;*
*and the Ultimate End*
*of the ones who are ungrateful is the fire.* (13:35)
*And those to whom We gave the Book are glad*
*at what was caused to descend to you.*
*And there are among the confederates*

*some who reject some of it.*
*Say: I was commanded to worship only God and not to ascribe*
*partners with Him. I call to Him*
*and to Him is my destination.* (13:36)
*And, thus, We caused to descend an Arabic determination. If you*
*had followed their desires*
*after what drew near you of the knowledge,*
*you would not have against God either a protector*
*or one who is a defender.* (13:37)

### COMMENTARY°

The second point discussed here is that of the partners people associate with God. The issue was also discussed in the first part of the chapter. It is raised here in the form of a sarcastic question which compares such alleged partners with God who deals with every soul and rewards it for what it earns in this life. The scene is concluded with a description of the suffering those who invent this fallacy are certain to endure in this life and the greater suffering they will meet in the hereafter. This contrasts with the security and blessings awaiting the righteous: **(13:33-13:35)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Write a paragraph in answer to these questions: What are signs 6:118-6:120 referring to? What is their purpose? What questions does it cause you to think about? What information does it give? What are the assumptions? How to you interpret it? What are the implications if someone does not follow what it says?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to:

Evaluate Reasoning by:•

Use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them

Clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words

Develop criteria for evaluation

Recognize and pinpointing contradictions

Distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts

# Lesson 96(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Developing Criteria for Evaluation: Clarifying Values and Standards

## How is Developing Criteria for Evaluation by Clarifying Values and Standards used in the Quran?

### Criteria Include

**Clear evidence:** *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

**Meditation, pondering, considering:** *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

**Recollection:** *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

**Reflection:** *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

**Taking to heart:** *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

**Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises:** *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

**Bringing your proof, showing your evidence:** *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

**People of intellect and reflection:** *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

**Explaining distinctly:** *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that*

*you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

**Being reasonable:** *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

**Being just and fair:** *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

What information does the Quran give in this sign?
What information do I need to answer my question?

*Then, believe you in some of the Book, and are ungrateful for some?* (2:85)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 13: THUNDER (AL-RA'D)

## SIGNS 13:38-13:43

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you*
*and We assigned for them spouses and offspring.*
*And it had not been for a Messenger to bring a sign*
*but with the permission of God.*
*For every term there is a Book.* (13:38)
*God blots out what He wills*
*and brings to a standstill what He wills;*

*and with Him is the essence of the Book.* (13:39)
*And whether We cause* ***you*** *to see some*
*of what We have promised them*
*or call you to Ourselves, on* ***you*** *is delivering the message*
*and on Us is the reckoning.* (13:40)
*Consider they not that We approach the earth,*
*reducing it from its outlying parts?*
*And God gives judgment. There is no one who postpones*
*His determination. And He is Swift in reckoning.* (13:41)
*And, surely, those who were before them planned,*
*but to God is the plan altogether.*
*He knows what every person earns.*
*And the ones who are ungrateful will know*
*for whom will be the Ultimate Abode.* (13:42)
*And those who were ungrateful say:* ***You*** *are not one who is sent.*
*Say: God sufficed as a witness between me and between you*
*and whoever has knowledge of the Book.* (13:43)

## COMMENTARY°

Whether God inflicts any of His threats upon them during the Prophet's lifetime or causes him to die before that, the fact of the matter remains the same. The nature of the message and the nature of God remain the same: **(13:40)** This clear and decisive directive illustrates the nature of the message and the role of its advocates. Such advocates are required to fulfil their role, as it may be at every stage. They are not responsible for reaching any goal other than that determined by God. It is not for them to precipitate the attainment of any goal. They should never entertain any thought of failure when they see that their efforts have not attained power in the land. They are merely advocates of a message, and they should never go beyond this advocacy role.

God's might is clearly seen in everything around us. When strong and affluent communities deny God, allow corruption to spread and claim that they make their own affluence, God's hand begins to reduce their power, wealth and general standing. They are confined to a limited stretch of land after having had an extended area of rule and influence. When God determines that such communities shrink in their power and area, His rule is carried out, with no power able to stand in its way: **(13:41)**

Those ungrateful in Arabia are not stronger or more powerful in their scheming than the communities which lived before them. Yet those were smitten by God who is more powerful and more elaborate in His planning: **(13:42)**

The chapter concludes by mentioning the fact that the ungrateful deny God's message given to the Prophet Muhammad. Its opening confirms the truth of his message. Thus the beginning and the end address the same point. God's testimony is called for, and it is certainly sufficient. After all, He has absolute knowledge of this book, or divine writ, and of all other revealed books: **(13:43)**

Thus ends the chapter which has taken us along a trip to discover the great horizons of the universe and to show us some of the inner aspects of the human soul. It makes profound and lasting impressions on our hearts and minds, leaving the final testimony to God, which is made at both the beginning and the end. It is a testimony to put an end to all arguments.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze 13:38-13:39 based on the criterion above..

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. :

I was able to develop and clarify criteria for evaluating writing.
Continually evaluate written material and discuss its criteria.
Specific points should be explained in terms of the nine standards that you support (such as clarity)

## Lesson 97(1). Critical Thinking Strategy
### Analyzing or Evaluating Actions

You should evaluate your actions in regard to Prophets of the past.

## Quranic Chapter 55: The Merciful (al-Rahman)
### Signs 55:1-55:25

**Madinah:** *The Merciful.* (55:1)
*He taught the Quran.* (55:2)
*He created the human being.* (55:3)
*He taught him the clear explanation.* (55:4)
*The sun and the moon are to keep count.* (55:5)
*And the stars and the trees both prostrate.* (55:6)
*And the heaven He exalted. And He set in place the Balance* (55:7)
*that you be not defiant in the Balance.* (55:8)
*Set up the weighing with justice*
*and skimp not in the Balance.* (55:9)
*And He set the earth in place for the human race.* (55:10)
*On and in it are many kinds of sweet fruit*
*and date palm trees with sheathed fruit trees* (55:11)
*and grain possessor of husks and fragrant herbs.* (55:12)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:13)
*He created the human being*
*from earth mud like potter's clay.* (55:14)
*He created the ones who are spirits*
*from a smokeless flame of fire.* (55:15)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:16
*The Lord of the Two Easts, and the Lord of the Two Wests!* (55:17)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:18
*He let forth the two seas to meet one another.* (55:19)
*Between them is a barrier which they wrong not.* (55:20)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:21
*From both of them go forth pearls and coral.* (55:22)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:23
*His are ones that run*
*with that which is displayed in the sea like landmarks.* (55:24)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:25)

## COMMENTARY°

It is the Merciful who has taught the Quran. The Merciful created the human being and taught him to articulate thought and speech. The sun and the moon function in due measure. The stars and the trees prostrate themselves before God. He has raised the skies high, and has set the balance, so that you may not exceed the balance. Weigh, therefore, with justice and do not fall short in the balance. He has laid the earth for His creatures, with all its fruits, its palm trees with sheathed clusters, its husked grain and its sweet-smelling plants. Which, then, of your Lords blessings do you both deny? **(55:1-13)**

We now turn back to the earth and its waters, which God has made in exact measure that determines quantity, type, how it runs and how it is used. He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they may meet; yet between them is a barrier which they do not cross. Which, then, of your Lords blessings do you both deny? **(55:19-55:25)**

The two bodies of water, expressed in the Arabic text as the two seas, are in fact the salty bodies of water including seas and oceans and the un-salty ones or rivers. God left them free to run and to meet, but did not allow them to exceed their limits. Each will fulfil its own function. In between them there is a barrier of the same nature, which God has put in place. The quantities of water on earth are not the result of any coincidence; they are determined by exact measure. Salty waters cover three-quarters of the earth's surface and they are mostly connected, while dry land represents only about one quarter of the earth. This very large quantity of salty water is the amount needed to keep the earth's atmosphere clean and suitable for supporting life.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze what is being denied of the blessings of God.

Answer the following questions.
What information are the ones who only believe in what was caused to descend to them using?
Where did they get that information?
What information is given about them?

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the interpretations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic?
How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

What is the meaning behind the information given in the above signs?
What is the Quranic response to their assumption?

## LESSON 97(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY

### DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

#### DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 55: THE MERCIFUL (AL-RAHMAN)

### SIGNS 55:26-55:45

**Madinah:** *All who are in or on it are ones*
*who are being annihilated,* (55:26)
*yet the Countenance of thy Lord will remain forever,*
*Possessor of The Majesty and The Splendor.* (55:27)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:28)
*Of Him asks whoever is in the heavens and in and on the earth.*
*Every day He is on some matter.* (55:29)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:30)
*We will attend to you at leisure, O you two dependents.* (55:31)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:32
*O you both, assembly of jinn and humankind!*
*If you were able to pass through the areas of the heavens*

*and the earth, then, pass through them!*
*But you will not pass through, but with an authority.* (55:33)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:34
*There will be sent against you both a flame of fire*
*and heated brass. Will you not, then, help yourselves?* (55:35)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:36
*Then, when the heaven was split then*
*it had been crimson like red leather,* (55:37)
*so which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:38)
*On that Day no one will be asked about his impiety*
*neither humankind nor ones who are spirits.* (55:39)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:40)
*Ones who sin will be recognized by their mark*
*and they will be taken by their forelocks and their feet.* (55:41)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:42)
*This is hell which the ones who sin deny!* (55:43)
*They will go around between it*
*and between scalding boiling water!* (55:44)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:45)

## COMMENTARY°

Having taken us on this round in the great universe, referring to different types of creatures that will inevitably die, the chapter now mentions the only One who is eternal, and to whom all glory and majesty belong. As we see death overtaking all creatures, we are conscious of the truth of God, the Eternal: All that lives on it perishes; but forever will remain the face of your Lord full of majesty, granting grace. Which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny? **(55:26-55:28)**

All sounds become hushed, breathing faint, and limbs stop moving. The air of death spreads over all living creatures, stopping every move throughout the heavens and earth. Only the majesty of the Eternal face overshadows all creatures, time, place and the entire universe. Human expression cannot depict the scene. It cannot add to the Quranic text which gives us a feeling of humble tranquillity, complete silence and total majesty. It paints a scene of total emptiness that leaves the whole universe motionless after it had been bustling

with life. Yet it instils in us an image which we cannot understand from our experience but can comprehend. The same comment is added, as the chapter considers the full understanding of this fact to be one of the blessings humans and jinn are reminded of: **(55:28)**

### APPEALS FROM ALL

The truth of God s eternity gives rise to another truth: all creatures are bound to perish and, therefore, they all address everything related to their existence to the One who is without equal, eternal and in control of everything in the universe:

Everyone in heaven and earth entreats Him. Every day He manifests Himself in some wonderful way. **(55:29-55:30)**

### A FRIGHTENING THREAT

What a frightening threat that neither human being nor jinn can face. **(55:31-55:36)** Indeed firm mountains, stars and galaxies tremble to hear it. God Almighty, in all His power and majesty, says that He will attend to the reckoning of these two humble creatures, the human being and jinn giving His statement an air of warning! It is unimaginably terrible!

This **(55:39)** applies to a particular situation on that day when all will be present. It is a day with different situations: in some people will be questioned and in some others no question will be put to them. In some, every soul will argue its own case, trying to put the blame on its associates, and in others no word of argument or dispute will be allowed. It is a long, extended day, with many positions and situations, each of which is awesome, and each is witnessed by multitudes of creatures. This verse speaks of a particular situation when no human or jinn will be asked about their sins. Everything is already well known, and the deeds of all are out in the open. Signs of misery appear as black on some faces, and signs of triumph appear white on others. Every face tells of what is going to happen. Can there by any denial on that day?

This **(55:41)** is a scene that combines force with humiliation: forelocks and feet are tied together and the guilty are so cast into hell. Can there be any denial then? As this is going on, the chapter addresses its audience, as if they are witnessing this continuing process of casting the guilty, with their forelocks and feet combined, into hell: **(55:43)** It is present here, as you are now seeing it. **(55:44)** It is exceedingly hot; they have nowhere to go other than round and between the flames and scorching fluids. Look at them as they go round now: **(55:45)** This is all that is said about those enduring this most painful suffering. The chapter then turns its attention to those enjoying honor and bliss.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

In determining the difference between relevance, the Quran asks a rhetorical question: Had you been witnesses when God charged you with this way of forbidding certain animals? The Quranic message mentions two kinds of flocks—beasts of burden and those who are for slaughtering. It is God Who provides them. Satan has created nothing. The only prohibitions come from God. To state otherwise is to cause humanity to go astray.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

## LESSON 97(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 55: THE MERCIFUL (AL-RAHMAN) SIGNS 55:46-55:78

**Madinah:** *For him who feared the station before his Lord*
*are two Gardens.* (55:46)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:47)
*Possessor of wide shade.* (55:48)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:49)
*Two springs will be running.* (55:50)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:51)
*In them both every kind of sweet fruit of diverse pairs.* (55:52)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:53
*Ones who are reclining on places of restfulness the inner linings of which are of brocade. And the fruit plucked from trees while fresh, that which draws near from the two Gardens.* (55:54)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:55)
*In them both are ones who are restraining their (f) glance.*
*No humankind touched them (f) sexually before*
*nor ones who are spirits.* (55:56)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:57)
*They are as if they were like rubies and coral.* (55:58)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:59)
*Is the recompense for kindness other than kindness?* (55:60)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:61)
*Besides these are two other Gardens.* (55:62)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:63)
*Dark green.* (55:64)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*

*of you both will you both deny?* (55:65)
*In them both are two springs gushing.* (55:66)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:67)
*In them both are sweet fruits and date palm trees*
*and pomegranates.* (55:68
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:69)
*In them both are the good deeds, fairer.* (55:70)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:71
*Most beautiful eyed ones who will be restrained in edifices.* (55:72)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:73
*No humankind touched them (f) sexually*
*before nor ones who are spirits.* (55:74)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:75
*Ones who are reclining on green pillows*
*and fairer carpets.* (55:76)
*So which of the benefits of the Lord*
*of you both will you both deny?* (55:77
*Blessed be the Name of thy Lord,*
*Possessor of The Majesty and The Splendor.* (55:78)

## COMMENTARY°

For the first time in the Quran so far two gardens are mentioned, and there are probably more within the great garden of heaven. Their mention here, in particular, may be to stress their importance. In the next chapter. The Inevitable Event, we learn that the dwellers of heaven form two large groups: the ones to the fore who will be brought nearest to God, and the people to the right. Each will experience great bliss. Here also we feel that these two gardens are designated for a group with a high position. It may be the group described in the next chapter as being closest to God. We see another two gardens which are less refined than the first two and we feel that they belong to a group that comes next to the ones already mentioned. This group may be the people to the right. Whatever the case may be, let us look at this first grouping of two gardens, feeling their bliss. They are: **(55:48)** The Arabic word used for branches conveys in particular newly springing branches that spread an air of freshness. These gardens have: **(55:50)** Thus, they are never short of water.

Moreover, they are: **(55:52)** Their fruits are plentiful and varied.

How will the dwellers of these gardens live? **(55:54)** Such is the lining of their couches: the top is left to our imagination. And then **(55:54)** It is near and easy to reach.

This, however, does not complete the aspects of luxury that await these people. There is still more to consider: **(55:56)** Their modest gaze reflects their chastity. They do not look to anyone other than their spouses. Besides, they instil a sense of luxury and brightness, appearing: **(55:58)**

All this comes as the reward for a person who stands in this life in fear of his Lord's presence and worships Him as if he sees Him. He feels that God sees him and he works to attain the superior grade of excellence that the Prophet described as to worship God as if you see Him. If you do not, then know that He sees you. As such they deserve more from the Lord of Grace for their excellence: **(55:60)**

In this presentation of these two lofty gardens and what they contain, every aspect of blessing and comfort is followed by the familiar comment: **(55:61)**

The chapter then describes what the other group, also with two gardens, will have: **(55:62)** The description shows them to be in some way less than the first two: **(55:64)** Their green color is very dark, almost black. They have: **(55:66)** Their water gushes forth, which is again different from, or less than, the flowing water of the springs in the first two gardens. Here we have: **(55:68)** while we had there: **(55:52)** Moreover: **(55:70)** Further aspects are added in the next sign: **(55:72)** The pavilions, or decorated tents, add connotations of bedouin luxury, gratifying those used to desert life. The mates they have here are sheltered, while the ones in the other two gardens are of modest gaze. However both groups of mates share in the same qualities of chastity and faithful devotion: **(55:74)**

We see the dwellers of these two gardens enjoying their luxuries: **(55:76)** The fine quality of the carpets in these gardens is given a special description in Arabic, which is an adjective used of the Abqar Valley; in olden times the Arabs believed this to be the dwelling place of the jinn. Hence they attributed every marvellous thing to this valley, describing it as Abqari, as the carpets are here described. When compared with what the first two gardens contain, these are clearly more modest. Yet the familiar comment is added after every aspect of blessing mentioned here: **(55:77)**

The chapter concludes with a final note of glorification of the Lord whose face, full of majesty, will remain after all creation has perished. This is the most apt conclusion to a chapter that bears the name of the Lord of Grace: **(55:78)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze **6:149-6:150** based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

# LESSON 98(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

### HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

### WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

### ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

## QURANIC CHAPTER: THE HUMAN BEING (AL-INSAN)
## SIGNS 76:1-76:22

**Madinah:** *Approached the human being a long course of time*
*when he will be nothing remembered?* (76:1)
*Truly, We made the human being of a mingling of seminal fluid*
*that We may test him. So We made him hearing, seeing.* (76:2)
*Truly, We guided him on the way,*
*whether he be one who is thankful or ungrateful.* (76:3)
*Truly, We made ready for ones who are ungrateful chains*
*and yokes and a blaze.* (76:4)
*Truly, the pious will drink from a cup*
*that had been a mixture of camphor,* (76:5)
*a spring where the servants of God will drink,*
*causing it to gush forth, a great gushing.* (76:6)
*They live up to their vows and they fear a Day*
*when the worst will be that which flies far and wide.* (76:7)
*In spite of their love for it, they feed with food one who is needy*
*and the orphan and the prisoner of war saying:* (76:8)
*We feed you only for the Countenance of God.*
*We want no recompense from you nor any thankfulness.* (76:9)
*Truly, we fear our Lord*
*on a frowning, inauspicious Day.* (76:10)
*So God would protect them from worse on that day,*
*and would make them find radiancy and joyfulness.* (76:11)
*And He will give them recompense for their enduring patiently*
*with a Garden and silk,* (76:12)
*and ones who are reclining in it on raised benches.*
*In it they will see neither sun*
*nor excessive cold of the moon.* (76:13)
*And that which draws near them is its shade and clusters of grapes*
*will be subdued, a subduing.* (76:14)
*And are passed around among them receptacles of silver*
*and goblets that had been of crystal,* (76:15)
*crystal like silver, and that they calculated a calculating.* (76:16)
*And they are given to drink in it a cup*
*that had been with a mixture of ginger.* (76:17)
*There is a spring in it named Salsabil.* (76:18)
*And ones who are immortal youths will go around them whom,*
*when* ***you*** *had seen them,*
***you*** *would assume them to be scattered pearls.* (76:19)
*And when* ***you*** *had seen them, again*
***you*** *will have seen bliss and a great dominion.* (76:20)

*Upon them are garments of fine green silk and brocade.*
*And they will be adorned with bracelets of silver.*
*Their Lord will give to drink undefiled drink.* (76:21)
*Truly, this had been your recompense.*
*What had been that which is your endeavoring.* (76:22)

## COMMENTARY°

In totality, the chapter is a calm address encouraging people to turn to God, obey Him, seek His pleasure, remember His favors, work to avoid His punishment, maintain alertness to the test He puts His servants to and understand His wisdom in creation, bestowing favors, testing and giving the ungrateful respite. The chapter begins with an inspiring touch, asking the question: where was the human being before coming into this life? Who gave him his existence? Who gave him the position he occupies in this life after he had none: **(76:1)**

This is followed by a second touch speaking about human origins and God's wisdom manifested in his creation and His giving him his energies and faculties: **(76:2)** The third touch speaks of guiding person to the right way, giving him help to go along this way before leaving him to choose the way he wants to go and the fate he wants to end up with: **(76:3)** These three touches set the human heart thinking deeply, glancing back and casting a look forward, and then reflecting before choosing which way to go. Then the chapter gives clear advice to a person as he stands at the crossroads, warning him against taking the way leading to hell and encouraging him in every way to take the way to heaven, pointing to the great variety of pleasure that awaits him there: **(76:4-76:6)**

Before completing its description of what believers will enjoy, the chapter now draws a sketch showing the features of those righteous people. In so doing, it uses some fine words and expressions that are in perfect harmony with the splendid bliss these people enjoy in heaven: **(76:7-76:10)**

The chapter then presents the reward which will be given to these people who willingly attend to difficult duties, who fear the bleak, grim day, the generous who feed others despite themselves being in need, and who only seek God's pleasure, hoping for no reward from anyone else. As the chapter presents this, we find that it is a reward of security, happiness and perfect enjoyment: God will save them from the woes of that day, and will grant them radiance and joy, and will reward them for their patience in adversity with a garden and [garments of] silk. They will recline there on soft

couches, feeling neither burning sun nor severe cold. Its shades will come low over them, audits clusters of fruit will hang low, within easy reach. They will be served with silver plates and goblets that seem to be crystal, crystal-clear, but made of silver, the measure of which they are the ones to determine. They will be given to drink of a cup flavored with ginger, from a spring there called Salsabll. They will be waited upon by immortal youths. If you see them, you would think they were scattered pearls. If you were to look around, you would see only bliss and a vast kingdom. They shall be arrayed in garments of fine green silk and brocade; and adorned with bracelets of silver. And their Lord will give them a most pure drink. This is a reward for you. Your endeavours are well appreciated. **(76:11-76:22)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze as many of the statements that can be interpreted as if ... then statements in the section in order to practice implications or conclusions. Add your personal experiences where possible.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

## LESSON 98(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

### WHAT IS AN ARGUMENT?

Arguments differ from explanations. An explanation is also a series of statements, but the difference is that with an explanation, knowing the first statement is true. The statements that follow explain why the first statement is true. On the other hand, in the case of arguments, based on the series of statements or premises, you infer the conclusion.

Critical thinkers try to overlook their preconceptions when agreeing or disagreeing with a conclusion. They use tools of analysis to try to understand the reason behind the issue and to determine its relative strengths and weaknesses. One of the tools of analysis is to continue to ask for reasons and to consider other points of views. They pay special attention to possible strong arguments with which they disagree because they are aware of the tendency to ignore, oversimplify, distort or otherwise unfairly dismiss them. They analyze questions and place conflicting arguments and interpretations in opposition to one another as a means of highlighting key concepts, assumptions, implications, and so forth. When giving or being given an interpretation, students learn to recognize the difference between evidence and interpretation, explore the assumptions on which interpretations are based and propose and evaluate alternative interpretations for their relative strength. As autonomous thinkers, they consider competing theories and develop their own theories.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 76: THE HUMAN BEING (AL-INSAN) SIGNS 76:23-76:31

**Madinah:** *Truly, We sent down to **you** the Quran,*
*a sending down successively.* (76:23)
*So have **you** patience for the determination of **your** Lord*
*and obey not anyone of them,*
*not the ones who are perverted nor the ungrateful.* (76:24)
*And remember thou the Name of **your** Lord*
*at early morning dawn and eventide.* (76:25)
*And during the night, prostrate **yourself** to Him*
*and glorify Him a lengthy part of the night.* (76:26)
*Truly, these are they who love that which hastens away*
*and they forsake a weighty day behind them.* (76:27)
*We created them and We strengthened their frame.*
*And when We willed, We will substitute their likes*
*with a substitution.* (76:28)
*Truly, this is an admonition.*
*And whoever willed, he took himself on a way to his Lord.* (76:29)

*But you will it not unless God wills it.*
*For God had been Knowing, Wise.* (76:30)
*He causes to enter whom He wills into His mercy.*
*And the ones who are unjust,*
*He prepared for them a painful punishment.* (76:31)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter then addresses the Prophet encouraging him to stand firm in the face of those who turn away, persist in ingratitude and deny the truth. He is directed to remain patient in the face of all this adversity and to await God's judgment. He should maintain his ties with his Lord, deriving strength from Him whenever he feels that the road he has to travel is too long: **(76:23-76:26)**

In conclusion, the chapter reminds the ungrateful of the heavy day that they do not reckon with. This is the day feared by the righteous who are keen to guard against its punishment. It tells them that they represent no serious issue to God who gave them all the power they have and is able to replace them with others. He bestows His favors on them in fulfilment of His wish to put people to the test. The chapter ends with a brief mention of the results of this test: **(76:27-76:31)**

Between the opening and close, the chapter gives one of the longest descriptions of the blessings granted to the people of heaven. These are mostly material, but they are coupled with God's acceptance and the honor He grants. **(75:22-75:23)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What is the conclusion to the arguments in these verses? What are its relative strengths? Are there any weaknesses? Are there any arguments you disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.

I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.

I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

## Lesson 99(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations

### The Middle Community

**Islamic Moderation:**[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

## Quranic Chapter 65: Divorce (al-Talaq)

### Signs 65:1-65:7

**Madinah:** *O Prophet! When you divorced your wives,*
*then, divorce them (f) after their (f) waiting periods*
*and count their (f) waiting periods.*
*And be God-conscious, your Lord.*
*And drive them (f) not out from their (f) houses*
*nor let them (f) go forth*

*unless they approach a manifest indecency.*
*These are the ordinances of God.*
*And whoever violates the ordinances of God,*
*then, truly, he did wrong to himself.*
***You** are not informed so that perhaps God*
*will cause to evoke something after that affair.* (65:1)
*Then, when they (f) reached their (f) term, either hold them (f) back*
*as one who is honorable or part from them (f)*
*as one who is honorable and call to witnesses from two possessors*
*of justice from among you and perform testimony for God.*
*That is admonished for whomever had been believing in God*
*and the Last Day. And he who is God-conscious,*
*He will make a way out for him.* (65:2)
*And He will provide him with where he not anticipate.*
*And whoever puts his trust in God, then,*
*He will be enough for him.*
*God is One Who Reaches Through His command.*
*Surely, God assigned a measure to everything.* (65:3)
*And as for those who gave up hope of menstruation among your*
*women, if you were in doubt, their (f) waiting period is three*
*months and for those who have not yet menstruated. As for those*
*(f) who are imbued with pregnancy, their (f) term is that they (f)*
*bring forth their (f) burden. And whoever is God-conscious,*
*He will make his affair with ease for him.* (65:4)
*That is the command of God which He caused to descend to you.*
*And whoever is God-conscious,*
*He will absolve him of his evil deeds*
*and will enhance for him a compensation.* (65:5)
*Cause them (f) to dwell where you inhabited*
*according to what you are able to afford*
*and be not pressing them (f), putting them (f) in straits.*
*And if they (f) had been imbued with pregnancy,*
*then, spend on them (f) until they bring forth their (f) burden.*
*Then, if they (f) breast feed for you,*
*give them (f) their compensation.*
*And each of you take counsel between you*
*as one who is honorable.*
*But if you make difficulties for one another,*
*then, another would breast feed on behalf of the father.* (65:6)
*The possessor of plenty spends from his plenty.*
*And he whose provisions were measured, he will spend out of what*
*God gave him. And God places not a burden on any person beyond*
*what He gave him. God will make ease after hardship.* (65:7)

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter, Divorce, is an outline by God of the rules governing divorce. The chapter deals with a number of other family issues that result from divorce. It specifies the time when divorce may take place if it is to gain God's approval and to follow His law: **(65:1)** It states the divorced woman's right and duty to stay in her family home, i.e. her divorcing husband's home, during her waiting period. She cannot be turned out and should not leave of her own accord except in situations where a woman has committed an act of gross indecency: **(65:1)** It also specifies the woman's right to leave home after the end of her waiting period and her freedom to do what she likes, unless her husband has reinstated the marriage within the waiting period. Should this occur, it should only be to resume normal married life between them. It cannot be done to cause the woman any harm or to deprive her of the chance to marry a different man: **(65:2)** Whichever option is followed, retaining the marriage or allowing the break up to be complete, it should be in the presence of witnesses: **(65:2)**

In Chapter 2: The Cow (*al-Baqarah*), the waiting period of a woman who has not yet reached the menopause is specified as three cycles, counting either the time of menstruation or the time of cleanliness. The scholarly difference here is based on the linguistic meaning of the term used in the chapter which applies to either period. In this chapter, the waiting period of a divorced woman who has passed the menopause or who is too young to have a period is specified: **(65:4)** Likewise, the waiting period of a pregnant divorcee is specified: **(65:4)**

The chapter also includes rulings on the home where a divorcee woman lives during her waiting period and, if she is pregnant, her right to maintenance until she has delivered the baby: **(65:6)** The chapter then goes on to give detailed rules about the breast-feeding of a divorcee's child and her right to financial compensation if she so breast-feeds the child, if the two parents agree this is in the child's best interests, as also provisions for the child's breast-feeding by another woman if the two cannot agree: **(65:6)** The chapter then adds further details on maintenance and compensation in all cases, making it commensurate with the financial means of the divorcing husband: **(65:7)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?

2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

## LESSON 99(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

We have seen the Quranic sign that claims one of the proofs of its divine origin is the question of contradictions. A human created document would contain many contradictions while the Quran does not. The Quranic style is one of harmony and consistency.

Whereas there are no contradictions in the Quran and its signs, there are man-made contradictions that arise from the interpretation of some of the verses, in particular, 4:34.

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like-cases in a like-manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what they get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them. Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views.

The most conclusive arguments in Islamic tradition to prove or disprove something is to use the Quran to prove another point in the Quran. Using this method, we get to the heart of the main reason why the word "beat" causes a man-made contradiction in the Quran.

We begin with two premises: Islam encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The Prophet said: Marriage is half of faith. He also said: Divorce is deplorable.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. The students can discuss their views on the two different versions and if they interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, *The Study Quran)*

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be God-conscious and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

For the Muslim, the Prophet is the living Quran; that is, he practiced exactly whatever God revealed in the Quran. If it was a command to good such as fasting, daily formal prayer, pilgrimage, purifying alms, charity, he performed these commands. If it was to prevent a wrong like drinking alcohol, gambling or eating pork, he refrained from these things. As the living Quran, the life, behavior and sayings of the Prophet serve as a model for all Muslims.

As the Quran refers to the Prophet as a mercy to humanity and the model whose example should be followed, it is clear that he would have carried out any and all of the commands (imperative forms of the verb) in the Quran that related to his life (there are commands specific to other Prophets as well) yet we find an exception in *daraba* according to the interpreters over the centuries.

In regard to 4:34 and the use of *daraba* in the imperative form allowing husbands to "strike, beat, hit, chastise or spank" a *nushuz* wife, in all of the canonical works there is no reference to Prophet Muhammad, peace and the mercy of God be upon him, having ever beaten women.

We read in 2:231: *When you divorce wives, and they (f) are about to reach their (f) term, then hold them (f) back honorably or set them (f) free honorably;*

*but hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression.* (2:231)

In other words, the Quran is telling husbands not to harm their wives whom they want to set free, not to hold them back by injuring them. The word "injuring" (*dirar*) also means hurt, harm, use force or commit aggression.

Therefore, we see a contradiction between 4:34 and 2:231. Jurists have created a contradiction that is not in the Quran by encouraging divorce and discouraging marriage so that we can conclude, a Muslim woman who is to be divorced must be set free without injuring, hurting, or using force against her, but a Muslim woman who wants to remain married does do under the threat of being beaten!

Does this make sense? 4:34 as presently interpreted contradicts 2:231. How can we eliminate this contradiction? There is a very simple solution: Revert the interpretation back to how the Prophet understood it through his behavior. so that *daraba* here is understood to mean "go away."

Another example from the Quran as to why the word daraba in 4:34 creates a man-made contradiction. 24:6-24:9 states: *And those who accuse their wives—and there are no witnesses but themselves—let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies sworn to God that he is among ones who are sincere and a fifth that the curse of God be on him if he has been the one who lies. And it will drive off the punishment from her if she bears witness with four testimonies sworn to God that he is the one who lies, and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her if he has been among the ones who are sincere.*

The oaths of the wife prevail and punishment is averted from her. Therefore, she is not to be "beaten" by her husband. She is allowed to defend herself against any accusation he may have against her.

Thus a contradiction is created that is not in the Quran itself by interpreting *daraba* to mean "beat" instead of "go away" or "leave." The reality is that a wife who is to be divorced cannot be harmed. This protects a wife who wants to be set free. This is a right she is given in the Quran—not to be injured! When *daraba* is interpreted as beat, this reality becomes a myth.

It is a reality that 24:6-24:9 allows a wife who is accused by her husband without any witnesses other than himself to defend herself against the accusation and God and humanity accepts her defense, but because of a man-made contradiction of 4:34 and not following the behavior of the Prophet, the best model for humanity.

As critical thinkers, we immediately see a contradiction, not in the source itself, but in the way some husbands unjustly make themselves both judge and jury thereby allowing themselves to misinterpret God's Word.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 65: DIVORCE (AL-TALAQ)

## SIGNS 65:9-65:12

**Madinah:** *How many a town defied the command of its Lord and His Messengers,*

*so we made a reckoning, a severe reckoning*
*and We punished it with a horrible punishment.* (65:8)
*So it experienced the mischief of its affair*
*and the Ultimate End of its affair had been loss.* (65:9)
*God prepared for them a severe punishment.*
*So be God-conscious, O those imbued with intuition,*
*those who believed!*
*Surely, God caused to descend to you a Remembrance,* (65:10)
*a Messenger who recounts to you the signs of God,*
*ones that are made manifest, that he brings out those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*from the shadows to the light.*
*And whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with*
*morality, He will cause him to enter into Gardens beneath which*
*rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.*
*Surely, God did good with provision for him.* (65:11)
*It is God Who created the seven heavens and of the earth, a similar*
*number like them. The command comes forth between them so that*
*perhaps you would know that God is Powerful over everything and*
*that God, truly, enclosed everything in His Knowledge.* (65:12)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter's concluding note refers to the great universe, thus linking the theme of the chapter, its legislation and directives to God's will, power and knowledge that encompass the entire universe.

We do not know to what the term seven heavens really refers, nor are we aware of their sizes and dimensions. Likewise, we do not know what the seven earths are. This earth of ours may be one of them and the others are known to God alone.

This reference to the creation of the vast universe, seven heavens and likewise of the earthy is awe inspiring. It presents us with a great image of the Creator's limitless power, the vastness of His kingdom. When compared to the universe, the entire earth seems a tiny little place. How do we see those living on it, and how do we estimate an event that takes place on it? What value should we give to a little sum of money a person gives his divorced wife in maintenance, or that a woman forgoes?

God's command descends in between, or through, these seven heavens and the earth or the seven earths. A part of His command is the sum of these rulings concerning the subject matter of this chapter, i.e. divorce. It is, then, a great issue, even by human standards and our concept of time and place. To defy it is to be in defiance of a command that resounds throughout the heavens and the earths. It is a command that those on high hear of, as do other creatures in the

heavens and the earths. Defying it, then, becomes a ghastly offense that no wise believer would even contemplate, and particularly when God's messenger has recited to him God's precise revelations, enlightening him on this matter so as to take him from darkness into light.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

When arguing opposing views, students should be encouraged to find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

What do the different translations of 4:34 and 2:231 say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other when darab is interpreted as "beat," spank," or any other similar synonym?
What does each sign (4:34 and 2:231) say?
Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agree?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

## LESSON 100(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how students experience, how they describe, how they categorize, and how they reason about things. They become more careful and discriminating in their use of words and phrases. They hesitate before they accept this or that analogy or comparison between 4:34 and 2:231 as the previous lesson showed. They recognize the purposes of the comparisons they make. They recognize that purposes govern noting significant similarities and differences.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 98: THE CLEAR PORTENT (AL-BAYYINAH) SIGNS 98:1-98:8

**Madinah:** *Not would those who were ungrateful*
*from among the People of the Book,*
*nor the ones who are idol worshippers to be*
*ones who set aside their beliefs*
*until the clear portent approaches them:* (98:1)
*A Messenger from God, who recounts to them*
*purified scrolls* (98:2)
*wherein are truth-loving Books.* (98:3)
*Split up not among themselves those to whom the Book was given*
*until after the clear portent drew near them.* (98:4)
*They were commanded but to worship God as ones who are sincere*
*and devoted in the way of life to Him, as monotheists*
*and they perform the formal prayer*
*and they give the purifying alms.*
*That is the truth-loving way of life.* (98:5)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful among the People of the Book*
*and the ones who are idol worshippers will be in the fire of hell,*
*ones who will dwell in it forever.*
*Those are the worst of creatures.* (98:6)
*But those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*those are the best of creatures.* (98:7)
*Their recompense is with their Lord—Gardens of Eden, beneath*
*which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.*

*God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. That is for him who dreaded his Lord.* (98:8)

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter deals in a positive manner with a number of facts relating to history and faith. The first fact is that the sending of God's Messenger, Muhammad, was essential to the transformation of people of earlier revelations and idolaters, who had found their way into disbelief. They could not leave their erring ways behind without the Prophet's mission: **(98:1-98:3)**

Secondly, religious discord and conflict among the people of earlier revelations did not arise out of ignorance of their own religion, or from any obscurity or ambiguity in it. On the contrary, they ran into discord after they had received true knowledge and clear proof: **(98:4)**

Thirdly, with regard to its origin, divine faith is one. Its fundamentals are simple and clear and do not, by themselves and by their plain and easy nature, make for division or conflict: **(98:5)**

Fourthly, those who disbelieved after receiving clear proof are the worst creatures of all, while those who believe and do good deeds are the best. Therefore, the two receive totally different rewards: **(98:6-98:8)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabular** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

What similarities and differences do the Quranic verses point out between the practice of the early Quraysh and the Quranic message?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

## Lesson 101(1). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

### What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

## Quranic Chapter 59: The Banishment (al-Hashir) Signs 59:1-59:10

**Madinah:** *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (59:1)
*It is He Who drove out those who were ungrateful*
*—among the People of the Book—*
*from their abodes at the first assembling.*
*You thought that they would not go forth.*
*And they thought that they are ones who are secure in their fortresses from God.*
*But God approached them from where they anticipate not.*
*And He hurled alarm into their hearts.*
*They devastate their own houses with their own hands*
*and the hands of the ones who believe.*
*Then, take warning, O those imbued with insight!* (59:2)
*If God prescribed not banishment for them,*
*He would have punished them in the present.*
*And for them in the world to come*
*would be the punishment of the fire.* (59:3)
*That is because they make a breach with God and His Messenger.*
*And whoever made a breach with God,*
*then, truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (59:4
*Whatever palm trees you severed or left them as ones that arise from their roots, it was with the permission of God and so that He might cover with shame the ones who disobey.* (59:5)
*And what God gave as spoils of war to His Messenger from them,*

*you spurred not an animal for an expedition, neither any horse nor riding camel, but God gives authority to His Messengers over whomever He wills. And God is Powerful over everything.* (59:6)
*What God gave to His Messenger as spoils of war from the people of the towns is for God and His Messenger and the possessors of kinship and the orphans and the needy and the traveler of the way so that it be changing not hands between the rich among you.*
*And whatever the Messenger gave you, take it.*
*And refrain yourselves from what he prohibited you.*
*And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (59:7)
*For the poor who were of the ones who emigrate, those who were driven out from their abodes and their property, looking for grace from God and His contentment*
*and they help God and His Messenger,*
*there is also a share.*
*Those, they are the ones who are sincere.* (59:8)
*And those who took their abodes as dwellings and had belief before them, love them who emigrated to them and they find not in their breasts any need for what the emigrants were given and hold them in greater favor over themselves even though they themselves had been in destitution.*
*And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* (59:9)
*And those who drew near after them, they say: Our Lord! Forgive us and our brothers/sisters who preceded us in belief and make not in our hearts any grudge against those who believed*
*Our Lord! Truly, Thou art Gentle, Compassionate.* (59:10

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter was revealed shortly after the Muslims' encounter with the Jewish tribe of al-Nadir in Madinah. It describes how the event occurred and why, and what regulations were put in place in the Muslim community once it was over. All this is reported in the unique style of the Quran. Comments are added so as to educate the Muslim community and refine its attitudes, and the events themselves are used to highlight certain aspects and to give directives.

The chapter begins and ends with glorification of God, to whom the heavens and the earth belong, the Almighty, the Wise. Thus, the beginning and end are in perfect harmony with the subject matter of the chapter and the call to the believers to remain God-conscious and to reflect on Gods planning.

Here the chapter adds the first comment: **(59:2)** This instruction

comes at the right moment, when minds are ready to receive a lesson and learn from it. The next sign establishes that since God willed to take them to task for their treachery, they could not escape some form of punishment in this life, in addition to what awaits them in the life to come: **(59:3)** That they would be made to suffer in this life, in some form or another, was a foregone conclusion. Had God not chosen their evacuation, He would have punished them in some other way, and whatever punishment they would have suffered in this life was in addition to what they will receive in the hereafter.

They merited both: **(59:4)** The Arabic word translated here as defied, means to take a side other than God's. As He explains why they merited such punishment, God made His Messenger's side His own. Therefore, in the second half of the sign He mentions their being in defiance of Him only, as this automatically includes defying the Prophet. When defiant people take a side opposite to God's, they behave insolently. Rather stupidly, such small, powerless creatures expose themselves to God's anger and incur His severe retribution.

The chapter then reassures the believers that all that they did to those who defied God and His Messenger, such as cutting and burning their palm trees, was right. It thus gives God's verdict on it, particularly because some Muslims were rather unsure about their actions: **(59:5)**

> Whatever gains were taken from them God has turned over to His Messenger; you did not have to spur horse or riding-camel for its sake. Whatever gains God turns over to His Messenger from the people of the townships belong to God the Messenger, kinsfolk, orphans, the needy and the traveller in need. Thus, they would not just circulate among those of you who are rich. Whatever the Messenger gives you, take it; and whatever he forbids you, abstain from it. Remain God-fearing; for God is severe in retribution. [Such gains are for] the poor migrants who have been driven out of their homes and possessions, seeking God's favor and His goodly acceptance, and who help God and His Messenger. These are the ones who are true. And to those who were already firmly established in the Home and in faith, those who love the ones that seek refuge with them and harbour no desire in their hearts for whatever the others may have been given. They give them preference over themselves, even though they are in want. Those who are saved from their own greed are truly successful. Those who come after them pray. **(59:6-59:10)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, ev-

idence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

**HOW DO I MAP?**

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

**CONCEPT MAPPING:**

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

**PRE-QUESTIONS:**

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.

You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

**DEFINITION:**

What is....?

Where does ... fit?

What group does ... belong to?

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

How would I describe...?

What does ... look like?

What are its parts?

### VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

### EXAMPLES

What is a good example of ...?

What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

### EXPERIENCE

What experience have I had with ....?

What can I imagine about ...?

## Lesson 101(2). Critical Thinking Strategy Comparing Analogous Situations: Reframing Insights to New Contexts

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.

The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.

The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.

He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.

Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (Quranic Sunnah) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the divine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the

pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

## Quranic Chapter 59: The Banishment (al-Hashir) Signs 59:11-59:17

**Madinah:** *Have you not considered*
*those who are ones who are hypocrites?*
*They say to their brothers—those who were ungrateful—*
*among the People of the Book:*
*If you were driven out, we, certainly, will go forth with you*
*and we will never obey anyone against you ever.*
*And if you were fought against, we will, certainly, help you.*
*And God bears witness that they, truly, are ones who lie.* (59:11)
*Certainly, if they were driven out,*
*they would not go forth with them.*
*And if they were fought against they would not help them.*
*And if they had helped them, they would turn their backs.*
*Again, they would not be helped by them.* (59:12)
*Truly, you are a more severe fright in their breasts than God.*
*That is because they are a folk who understand not.* (59:13)
*They fight not against you altogether,*
*but in fortified towns or from behind walls.*

*Their might among themselves is very severe.*
*You would assume them united, but their hearts are diverse.*
*That is because they are a folk who are not reasonable.* (59:14)
*As the likeness of those who were before them,*
*they experienced the immediate mischief of their affair*
*and for them is a painful punishment.* (59:15)
*As the likeness of Satan when he said to the human being:*
*Be Ungrateful! Then, when he was ungrateful,*
*Satan said: I am free of you.*
*I fear God, the Lord of the worlds.* (59:16)
*The Ultimate End of both of them will be that they be in the fire,*
*ones who will dwell in it forever.*
*And that is the recompense of the ones who are unjust.* (59:17)

## COMMENTARY°

The chapter now turns back to discuss the event itself, painting a picture of another group that played a role in it, the hypocrites: **(59:11-59:17)** The chapter reports on what the hypocrites said to the al-Nadir tribe, promising them support, but then letting them down and showing that they cared nothing for their own promises. Every sentence in these verses states a fact, touches hearts, stirs up feelings and establishes a principle of education, knowledge and unshakeable faith.

The first of these establishes a bond of kinship between the hypocrites and the ungrateful pagans from among the people of earlier revelations: **(59:11)** The ones to whom the chapter refers as people of earlier revelations are the ungrateful, and the hypocrites are their brethren, despite the fact that they claim to be Muslims. Then the chapter gives a full and vivid picture of the hypocrites' promises and assurances to their brothers: **(59:11)** God, who knows what they truly are, states and confirms otherwise: **(59:11-59:12)** Events confirmed that what God stated was true and what they promised their brothers was false.

The chapter then states a fact explaining what those people, hypocrites and ungrateful from among the people of earlier religions, truly felt: **(59:13)** They feared the believers more than they feared God. Had they truly feared God, they would not have feared anyone else. Thus the chapter exposes the truth about those people, and adds another general truth. Now, the chapter goes on to describe a condition particular to the two parties, the hypocrites and the ungrateful among the people of earlier religions. This condition arises from the fact that they fear the believers more than they fear God: **(59:14)**

Those who believe in God must know the truth about themselves

and their enemies. This is half the battle. The Quran puts this truth to them in the context of an event that has already taken place, enlightening them about the true factors that were at play and explaining what it signified and the facts to which it pointed. This explanation was useful to those who witnessed that event as it unfolded. It should provide great enlightenment to future generations who should reflect on it and learn the truth from the One who knows all truth.

This evacuation of the al-Nadir from Madinah was not the first of its kind. It was preceded by the evacuation of the Qaynuqa tribe, to which the following verse most probably refers: **(59:15)**

The encounter with the Jewish tribe of Qaynuqa took place after the Battle of Badr, but before the Battle of Uhud. The Qaynuqa were bound by a treaty with the Prophet and the Muslims. When the Muslims won a great victory against the ungrateful in Badr, the Jews were upset and harbored a grudge against the Muslims. They feared that their position in Madinah would be weakened while the position of the Muslims would be strengthened. The Prophet got wind of what they were whispering to one another and learnt of their ill intentions. He reminded them of the treaty he had signed with them and warned them that their attitude might augur ill. They replied rudely to him, saying: Muhammad! Do not think too highly of your power. You have only encountered a group who knew little about fighting a war and you managed to score a victory against them. Should you engage us in battle, you will certainly know that we are true fighters.

Satan's role **(59:16-59:17)** with any human being who responds to his promptings, as described in these verses, is in line with his nature and the aim he defined for himself. It is most singular for any human being to listen to him when he is out to trick them and lead them to their ruin. Yet this is the permanent truth which the chapter states as its discussion of the event progresses further. It thus links the individual event with this permanent truth, setting it in real context.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

### WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

### WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them—out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains in height

## Lesson 101(3). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Thinking Precisely About Thinking

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

### Quranic Examples of Thinking Precisely About Thinking

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they re-*

*flect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

### WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present*

*and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 59: THE BANISHMENT (AL-HASHR)

### SIGNS 59:18-59:34

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be God-conscious*
*and let every soul look on what is put forward for tomorrow.*
*And be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (59:18)
*And be not like those who forgot God*
*and He caused them to forget themselves.*
*Those, they are the ones who disobey.* (59:19)
*The Companions of the Fire are not equal*
*to the Companions of the Garden.*
*The Companions of the Garden,*
*they are the ones who are victorious.* (59:20)
*If We had caused this, the Quran, to descend on a mountain,*
*you would have seen it as that which is humbled,*
*one that is split open from dreading God.*
*And there are the parables that We propound for humanity*
*so that perhaps they will reflect.* (59:21)
*He is God; there is no god but He,*
*One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.*
*He is The Merciful, The Compassionate.* (59:22)
*He is God besides whom there is no god but He, The King, The*
*Holy, The Peaceable, One Who is The Bestower, Preserver, The*
*Almighty, The Compeller, The One Who is The Supreme.*
*Glory be to God above partners they ascribe.* (59:23)
*He is God, the One Who is Creator, The One Who Fashions, The*
*One Who is The Giver of Form. To Him belongs the Fairer Names.*
*Whatever is in the heavens glorifies Him*
*and whatever is in and on the earth*
*and He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (59:24)

### COMMENTARY°

Believers are conscious of God. **(59:18-59:20)** This God-consciousness is a mental state that words cannot fully describe. It is a condition that makes the human heart alert, feeling God's presence at every moment. It keeps man always on the watch, fearing that God may see him in a condition that displeases Him. A believer knows that God's eye watches everyone and every heart at every moment. How and when can the human being be in a situation that God does not see?

Again, this is a statement **(59:18)** that means far more than the total sum of its words. The mere thought of it places before a person's heart the record of all actions he did throughout his life. He looks carefully at every line, adding up his total sum after looking at every detail. When he has done so, he knows what he has sent ahead of him for his future life. This alerts him to his weaknesses and shortcomings, even though he has done much good. How would he feel if his net balance shows little in the way of good actions? This is bound to keep the human heart always awake, looking always for ways and means to improve its record of good deeds.

The next sign warns them against a totally different situation: **(59:19)** This is a very strange situation, but a true one. Anyone who forgets God will remain in this present life without a bond that pulls him towards a higher horizon. He lives without a goal that gives his life a meaning higher than that of grazing cattle. In such a situation man becomes oblivious of his own humanity. This fact leads to another whereby such a person forgets his own soul. He makes no preparation for his next life, which is long-lasting, permanent. He does not take account of it when he looks at the balance of his deeds.

The following sign states that such people are the dwellers of the fire. It advises the believers to take a route different from theirs. After all, the believers are the ones going to heaven and their route is bound to be different: **(59:20)**

The two groups are different in nature, condition, way of life, direction and destiny. They are set on two different courses, which cannot meet in line, feature, plan, strategy or method of action. They cannot be in the same camp, neither in this present life nor in the future one. **(59:20)** Thus their fate is clearly stated, but that of the ones destined for the fire of hell is not even mentioned. It is too well known to deserve mention.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE QURAN

The chapter now adds a powerful note that shakes hearts to the core. It portrays what effect the Quran would have had on solid rocks had it been so sent down: **(59:21)** The moments when a person is fully receptive of some truth contained in the Quran will see him shake and shudder. He will experience such changes that are best represented in the physical world by the effects of magnetism and electricity or even stronger. God, the Creator of the mountains who bestowed the Quran from on high, says: **(59:21)** Anyone who has had some experience of the Quran touching their inner souls will appreciate this truth in a way that cannot be otherwise expressed. **(59:21)** Such an image should keep hearts thinking and reflecting.

It is an expansive glorification that puts together a number of God's glorious attributes. **(59:22-59:24)** It consists of three parts, with each beginning with God;s Oneness in the form of either, He is God—there is no deity other than Him, or, He is God, on its own. Each one of these most gracious names or attributes has its clear bearing on the universe and a felt influence on human life. Thus they bring home to the human heart their effect on life and the living. They are not negative attributes. Nor are they isolated from the universe, its situations, phenomena and events.

## Student Assessment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

#### Quranic Challenges

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

# APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
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61 = 41
62 = 42
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64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
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81 = 79
82 = 82
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84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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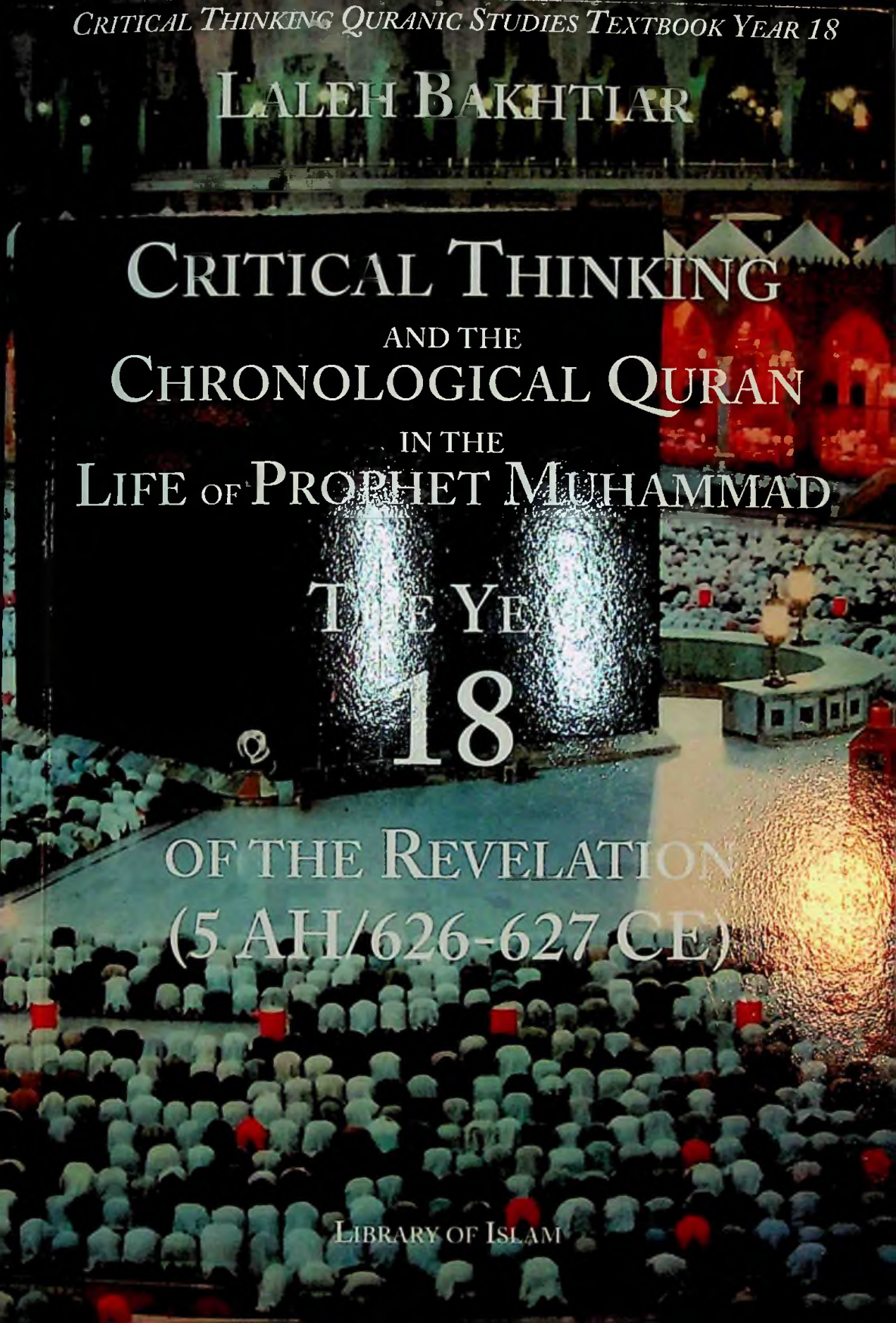
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*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 18*

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad



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Library of Islam

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# YEAR 18 OF THE REVELATION: MADINAH
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## CA. JUNE 2, 626 CE-MAY 22, 627 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 18*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 5 AH/ca. June 2, 626 CE-May 22, 627 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

**THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES**

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

## THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

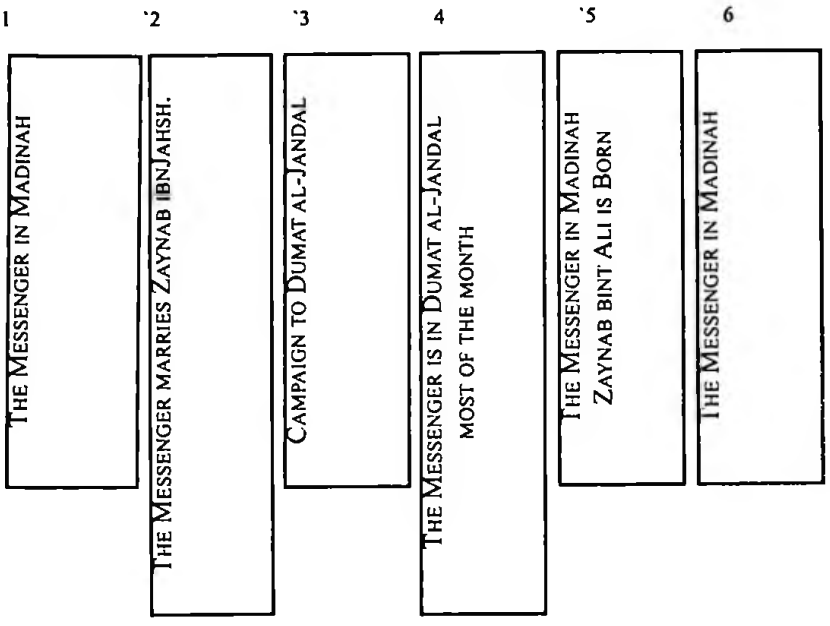
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# Preview *Book Year 18*

## *Timeline*

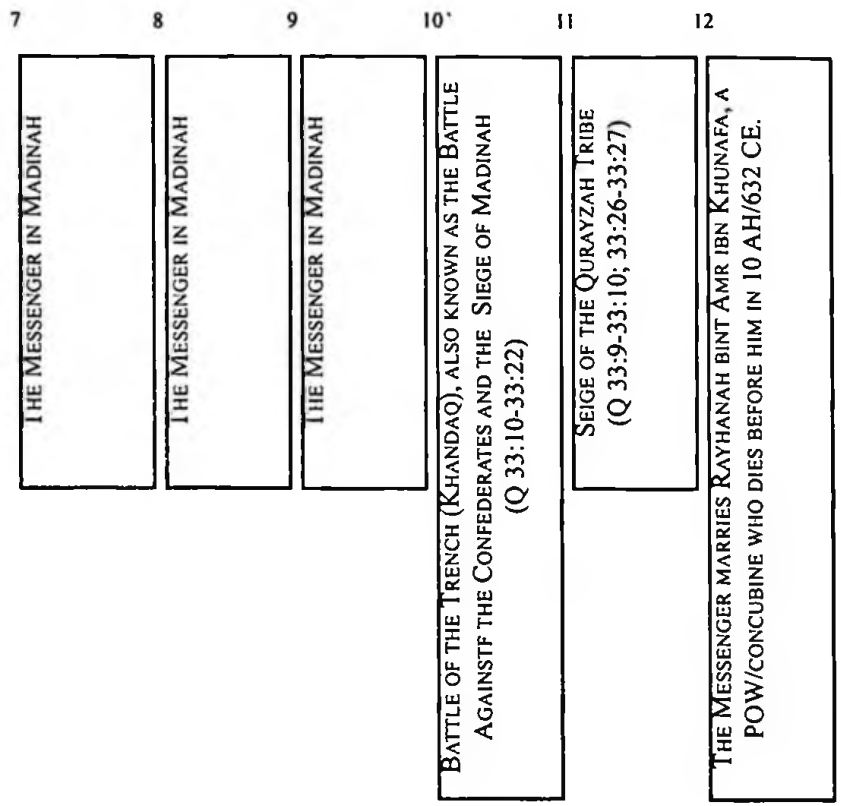



**Key**
1 = Muharram
2 = Safar
3 = Rabi I
4 = Rabi II
5 = Jamada I
6 = Jamada II

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = The Messenger Participates
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 18*

## *TIMELINE*




**Key**

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 18* presented includes Quranic Chapter 24 as the 102nd chapter revealed so the lessons are Lesson 102.

## LESSON 102(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[2]

### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

**Science:** In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taught by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

**Politics:** Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

**Education:** Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

**Psychology**: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

**Note for the Teacher**: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and in-

sights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, **economics.**[3]

## Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur)
## Signs 24:1-24:10

**Madinah:** *This is a chapter of the Quran*
*that We caused to descend*
*and We imposed laws in it. We caused to descend signs,*
*clear portents, so that perhaps you will recollect.* (24:1)
*The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer,*
*scourge each one of them one hundred strokes.*
*And let not tenderness for them take you*
*from the judgment of God,*
*if you had been believing in God and the Last Day.*
*And let them bear witness to their punishment*
*by a section of the ones who believe.* (24:2)
*The one who is an adulterer will not marry*
*but one who is an adulteress,*
*or one who is a female idolater.*
*And the one who is an adulteress will not marry*
*but one who is an adulterer,*
*or one who is a male idolater.*
*All that was forbidden to the ones who believe.* (24:3)
*And those who accuse the ones who are free, chaste (f)*
*and, again, bring not four witnesses,*
*then, scourge them eighty strokes*
*and never accept their testimony.*
*And those, they are the ones who disobey.* (24:4)
*But those who repented after that*
*and made things right,*
*so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:5)
*And those who accuse their spouses*
*—and there be no witnesses but themselves—*
*let the testimony of one of them be four testimonies*
*sworn to God that he is among the ones who are sincere* (24:6)
*and a fifth that the curse of God be on him,*
*if he had been among the ones who lie.* (24:7)
*And it will drive off the punishment from her*
*if she bears witness with four testimonies*

*sworn to God that he is among the ones who lie* (24:8)
*and the fifth, that the anger of God be on her*
*if he had been among the ones who are sincere.* (24:9)
*And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy*
*and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise—* (24:10)

## COMMENTARY°

This chapter is named *al-Nur*, meaning The Light, and light is identified as an essential attribute of God: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24:35)** It is also mentioned in respect of its effects on people's hearts and souls. Such effects are reflected in human morality and the manners of individuals, families and communities. They impart a brightness to human life that enlightens hearts and makes consciences transparent.

The chapter begins with an emphatic declaration of the fact that it is bestowed from on high, and that it is decreed with all that it contains of directives, commandments and morality: *This is a chapter of the Quran that We caused to descend and We imposed laws in it. We caused to descend signs, clear portents, so that perhaps you will recollect.* **(24:1)** This opening reflects the importance the Quran attaches to the moral aspect of human life, and to its central position in the Islamic faith.

The central theme of the entire chapter is the education of the Muslim community. At times, the methods employed by the chapter increase in their stiffness so as to culminate in prescribing mandatory punishments. At other times the chapter is softer and more gentle, filling our hearts with God's light and inviting us to reflect on the numerous signs He has placed throughout the entire universe. The aim of such contrasting approaches is one and the same: to cultivate people's consciences, enhance their sensitivity and refine their moral standards to the highest degree. The good manners of the individual, the family, the community and society's leadership are all intertwined as they all stem from the same source, which is belief in God, and shine with the same light received from Him. In essence, these manners combine light, transparency and brightness. Thus the education the chapter aims to achieve derives all its aspects from the basic source of light in the heavens and earth; that is, God's light that dispels all darkness in the universe, as well as that in people's hearts and souls.

The chapter may be divided into five parts, all tackling its basic theme. At the outset, the first delivers a decisive declaration outlining the status of this chapter, followed by the details of the mandatory punishment for adultery. It denounces this crime in clear terms, mak-

ing it clear that adulterers have no place in the Muslim community. It also explains the punishment for any false accusation of adultery, and the reasons for the severity of this mandatory punishment. Couples are exempted from this punishment when they take the prescribed oaths that end with their permanent separation. It then comments on the falsehood story. At the end it shows how men and women flock like with like: the good with the good and the evil with the evil.

The second part concerns itself with crime prevention, and the methods to reduce the temptation to sin. It begins with an outline of good manners when approaching others' homes and the need to seek permission before entry. It commands Muslims to lower their gaze and not to reveal women's adornments to anyone other than their very close relatives whom they are not legally entitled to marry. There is also in this part a clear encouragement to facilitate the marriage of young women, and a stern warning against forcing POW/slave girls into prostitution. All these are preventive measures that aim to promote purity and chastity in general. They aim to prevent what stirs up physical desire and to help people to maintain their chastity.

In the middle of this list of good manners as outlined in the chapter, the third part provides a link between all such manners and God's light. Here the chapter speaks of the people whose hearts are brightened with God's light and who always frequent mosques. By contrast, the ungrateful and their deeds are shown as though they are a mirage, or like layers of darkness. In this part we see different aspects of God's light throughout the universe: how all creatures glorify Him; how clouds are sent through the atmosphere; the succession of day and night; the creation of every walking creature out of water and how they acquire their different shapes, forms, types and roles. All these are there for people to look at and contemplate.

In the fourth part the hypocrites are seen to neglect the proper manners people should show when dealing with the Prophet. The most important of these are obedience to the Prophet and the implementation of any judgment he makes in disputes put to him for arbitration. By contrast, the believers are seen to maintain the appropriate standards in speaking to the Prophet and obeying him. In return, they are promised power, that they will establish and implement their faith and attain victory over the ungrateful.

The final part of the chapter again examines the good manners of the Muslim community, highlighting the need to seek admission when visiting relatives and friends, of hospitality to guests, and the fine manners that make the whole Muslim community a single fam-

ily, led by God's Messenger.

The chapter concludes with a declaration of God's ownership of all that is in the heavens and earth, His knowledge of people and what they harbor in their breasts, and their ultimate return to Him. They will have to face His reckoning on the basis of His knowledge of their deeds. Needless to say, His knowledge encompasses everything.

### AN UNUSUAL BEGINNING

This chapter has a unique opening that is not repeated anywhere else in the Quran. What is special is the use of the clause: *We have imposed* .... We take this to imply an emphatic assertion that people must take everything that the chapter includes in the same way. Social manners and morality are ordained in the same way as mandatory punishments. We need to remember here that such manners and morality are deeply rooted in human nature, but people tend to overlook them because of deviant social pressures and easy temptations. Hence, the divine revelations God has bestowed from on high place them back before people's eyes, explaining the clear logic of undistorted human nature.

This emphatic and clear opening is immediately followed with an explanation of the mandatory punishment for adultery, a ghastly crime that severs the ties between its perpetrator and the Muslim community. *The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer, scourge each one of them one hundred strokes. And let not tenderness for them take you from the judgment of God, if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. And let them bear witness to their punishment by a section of the ones who believe. The one who is an adulterer will not marry but one who is an adulteress, or one who is a female idol worshipper. And the one who is an adulteress will not marry but one who is an adulterer, or one who is a male idol worshipper. All that was forbidden to the ones who believe.* **(24:2-24:3)**

The punishment prescribed for adulterers was that outlined in Chapter 4, Women, which says: *And those who approach indecency among your wives, then call to bear witness against them (f) four among you. Then if they bore witness to the affair, hold them (f) back in their houses until death gathers them (f) to itself or God makes a way for them (f).* **(4:15)** Thus the punishment for the guilty adulteress was confinement at home and verbal reprimand, while the adulterer was punished by verbal reprimand only. Sometime later, God revealed the new mandatory punishment specified in this chapter. This is then the 'way' opened by God to which Chapter 4 alluded.

Flogging is the punishment of male and female adulterers who have not been empowered through marriage. This punishment is en-

forced on any Muslim who is sane, of age and a free person whose guilt is established. As for a person who has had sexual relations within a proper marriage and then commits adultery even though he is sane, of age and free, his punishment is stoning.

Such stoning is not confirmed in the Quran, while flogging is established clearly in the Quran.

The first point to note is the difference in the punishment incurred by adulterers, depending on their marital status. A Muslim who is of age, free and sane and who has already experienced sex within marriage is fully aware of the clean and proper way to satisfy sexual desires. To abandon this and resort to adultery betrays a deviant and corrupt nature. Hence, punishment is increased in this case. A virgin on the other hand may feel the temptation so strongly when he is inexperienced. There is also a difference in the nature of the act itself. A married person is able to enjoy sex in a much better and more refined way than a virgin. Hence, he deserves increased punishment.

As has already been mentioned, the chapter speaks here of the mandatory punishment for the married adulterer only. It emphasizes the requirement to put it into effect, with no compassion shown to the perpetrator: *The one who is an adulteress and the one who is an adulterer, scourge each one of them one hundred strokes. And let not tenderness for them take you from the judgment of God, if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. And let them bear witness to their punishment by a section of the ones who believe.* **(24:2)** The Muslim community is required to implement this punishment showing no sympathy for the offenders. The punishment should be administered in public with a number of believers present. This makes it harder for the offenders and increases the deterrent effect for the beholders.

The crime is shown to be increasingly heinous. Hence, all ties between the perpetrators and the Muslim community are cut off: *The one who is an adulterer will not marry but one who is an adulteress, or one who is a female polytheist. And the one who is an adulteress will not marry but one who is an adulterer, or one who is a male polytheist. All that was forbidden to the ones who believe.* **(24:3)**

### MEASURES AGAINST FALSE ACCUSATION

Prescribing a very hard punishment for adultery is not sufficient, on its own, to protect the Muslim community and ensure the purity of its atmosphere. Therefore, a supplementary order is given to isolate the adulterers from the rest of the Muslim community. Furthermore, heavy punishment is prescribed for those who accuse chaste women of adultery without providing firm evidence in support of

their accusation:

*And those who accuse the ones who are free, chaste (f) and, again, bring not four witnesses, then, scourge them eighty strokes and never accept their testimony. And those, they are the ones who disobey. But those who repented after that and made things right, so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:4-24:5)**

Allowing people to accuse chaste women, whether married or not, without clear proof would mean that people could make such accusations without fear of repercussion. This in turn would stain the Muslim community's reputation. Every individual would feel threatened with false accusations. Every husband would suspect his wife, and every wife her husband, and people would begin to doubt their legitimacy. In such an intolerable state of doubt and suspicion, every family would be undermined. Moreover, when such accusations are frequently made, those who steer themselves away from adultery might begin to think that such crime was common in society. They might then begin to see it in a different light, as less ghastly, as a result of such frequent mention. Furthermore, those who would not even have contemplated it at all might even begin to think of doing so, feeling that since many others do it, there is no harm in it.

Thus, in order to protect people's honor, and to prevent their suffering from suspicion as a result of uncorroborated accusations, the Quran prescribes for false accusation a punishment that almost equals that of adultery. False accusers are to be flogged with 80 stripes each, and their future testimony in any case or situation rejected. Plus they are to be labelled as transgressors. The first part of this punishment is physical, while the second is moral. It is sufficient that the accuser is deprived of the right to testify, and considered an unreliable and unacceptable witness no matter what the case or situation. The third part is religious. The one guilty of false accusation follows a line that deviates from the straight path of faith. The only way out is that the accuser should provide four witnesses who have seen the offense being committed, or three alongside him if he himself has seen it. If the four give such testimony, the accusation is proved and the punishment for adultery is enforced on the perpetrator.

The point at issue here is that the Muslim community does not lose much by suppressing an accusation that cannot be proven. Conversely it loses much more by condoning accusations that cannot be proven. Indeed when such accusations become the subject of casual conversation, they serve to encourage people to do the same, while stopping any discussion of such matters, unless clearly proven, delivers a clear message that adultery, an abominable offense, is rare or even non-existent in society. Moreover, the false accusation of

chaste women causes the latter much pain and mental suffering, in addition to its being a means of destroying families and relations.

The punishment meted out to the false accuser continues to hang over his head, even after its administration, unless he genuinely repents: *But those who repented after that and made things right, so, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:5)**

### WHEN A HUSBAND ACCUSES HIS WIFE

All the foregoing applies to accusing women of adultery. An exception is made, however, in the case of a husband accusing his wife. To require him to produce four witnesses is unreasonable. In normal situations, a man does not accuse his wife falsely, because the very accusation carries a negative reflection on his own honor and against his own children. Hence, this type of accusation carries a totally different ruling: **(24:6-24:10)**

This ruling lightens the burden for married people in a way that takes their special circumstances into consideration. A man may find his wife in a compromising position but there be no one else as witness to the deed. In this case, he swears by God four times that he is telling the truth, and adds a fifth incurring God's curse on himself if he is telling a lie. These oaths are called testimonies, because he is the only witness. When he has done so, he pays her any portion of her dowry that may be outstanding, and she is immediately and finally divorced. She is also liable to the punishment for adultery. However, she can avert this punishment by swearing by God four times that her husband is telling lies, and adds a fifth incurring God's curse on herself if he is telling the truth. If she does, then no punishment is administered in this case, but the marriage is irrevocably terminated. If she is pregnant, the child is named after her, not after her husband. No one can attach any blame to the child. If anyone does make an accusation against the child, they are liable to punishment.

The chapter comments on this delicate ruling by saying: *And had it not been for the grace of God on you and His mercy and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise.* **(24:10)** It does not tell us what would have happened, had God not bestowed His favors and grace on us in this way, and extended His manifest grace by accepting our repentance. Instead, the statement leaves us with an impression that it is something very serious, and that people are much better off, avoiding it through God's grace.

### LEGISLATION IS GIVEN WHEN NEEDED

As this case provides for a special situation which is exempted from the general rules of false accusation, it may be asked why God

did not reveal this exception to the general rules in the first place? Why did God wait until a situation occurred, one which caused embarrassment and hardship?

God certainly knows all this, but in His infinite wisdom He bestowed from on high the revelation outlining the rules when the need for it was keenly felt. Thus, the rules were received with eagerness, and people immediately recognized the wisdom behind the legislation and the divine grace it ensured. Hence, the verses outlining the procedure conclude with the statement: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy and that God is Accepter of Repentance, Wise*— **(24:10)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that

practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

## LESSON 102(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
## SIGNS 24:11-24:20

**Madinah:** *truly, those who drew near*
*with the calumny are many among you.*
*Assume it not worse for you.*
*Nay! It is good for you.*
*To every man of them is what he deserved of sin.*
*And as for those who turned away*
*towards the greater part from among them, there will be*
*a tremendous punishment for him.* (24:11)
*Why not when you heard about it,*
*thought not the ones who are male believers*
*and the ones who are female believers*
*the better of themselves and have said:*
*This is a clear calumny?* (24:12)
*Why brought they not about four witnesses for it?*
*As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God,*
*those, they are the ones who lie.* (24:13)
*If it not were for the grace of God on you and His mercy*
*in the present and in the world to come,*
*certainly, would have afflicted you a tremendous punishment*
*for what you muttered.* (24:14)
*When you received it on your tongues and said with your mouths*
*of what there is no knowledge,*
*you assume it insignificant*
*while it is serious with God.* (24:15)
*And why, when you heard it, said you not:*
*It will not be for us to assert this.*
*Glory be to **You**! This is a serious false charge*
*to harm the reputation of another.* (24:16)
*God admonishes you*
*that you shall never revert to the like of it,*
*if you had been ones who believe.* (24:17)
*And He makes manifest for you the signs.*

*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (24:18)
*Truly, those who love that indecency*
*be spread about those who believed,*
*they will have a painful punishment in the present*
*and in the world to come.*
*And God knows and you know not.* (24:19)
*And if it were not for the grace of God on you*
*and His mercy,*
*you would be ruined,*
*and that God is Gentle, Compassionate.* (24:20 )

## Commentary°

### A False Accusation Against the Prophet's Wife

Having outlined the rules applicable in cases of accusing women of adultery, the chapter mentions a case of false accusation that reflects the repugnance of this crime. This involved the Prophet's own household with its noble and chaste inhabitants. It reflected on the honor of the Prophet, the most beloved person by God, and the honor of his friend, Abu Bakr, the Prophet's closest Companion. It also involved the honor of a man, Safwan ibn al-Muattal, who enjoyed the Prophet's own testimony that he never saw anything but good from him. It was a case that preoccupied the entire Muslim community in Madinah for a whole month.

The Quran refers to this whole episode, calling it The Falsehood: **(24:11-24:20)** It was not merely one or a few individuals that circulated the story: *truly, those who drew near with the calumny are many among you. Assume it not worse for you.* **(24:11)** On the contrary, they were a 'band' or a group working for a particular objective. Abd Allah ibn Ubayy was not the only one who fabricated the story. Rather, he was the one who took the lead and played the larger part in the affair. He simply represented the band of Jews or hypocrites who felt unable to fight the Quranic message in open engagement. Therefore, they sought to hide behind the pretense that they were Muslims. They felt that this would enable them to scheme in secret against the Quranic message. This false story was one of their worst schemes which was so successful that some Muslims were deceived and a few repeated the story. The real culprits, however, were the band headed by Abd Allah ibn Ubayy, a canny schemer who operated behind the scene, saying nothing in public that might have incriminated him. He simply whispered into the ears of those whom he trusted never to testify against him. The plan was so subtle that the false rumors continued to circulate for a whole month in Madinah, the purest society on earth at that time.

The Quranic passage opens with stating this fact so as to make clear the enormity of the event and the fact that it was perpetrated by a group of people intent on wicked scheming against the Quranic message. The chapter, however, quickly reassures the Muslim community that the eventual outcome of the event will not harm them: *Nay! It is good for you. To every man of them is what he deserved of sin.* **(24:11)**

It was indeed good because it exposed those who schemed against the Quranic message, targeting the Prophet and his family. It also showed the Muslim community the importance of prohibiting the accusation of adultery, and prescribing a severe punishment for such false accusations. The event also clearly showed the dangers that threatened the Muslim community if people were to casually accuse chaste female believers who might behave unwittingly. For once this begins, it never stops. Indeed, it can increase at such a scale that it eventually touches the most noble of leadership. The result is that the Muslim community loses all values that provide protection against such a state of affairs. Moreover, it is good for the Muslim community that God outlines how best to deal with such an affair.

As for the pain suffered by the Prophet, his household and the Muslim community in general, it is all part of the test they had to go through in order to learn through experience.

Those who were involved in circulating and repeating the false story will bear their fair share of sin, according to what they did or said: *And as for those who turned away towards the greater part from among them, there will be a tremendous punishment for him.* **(24:11)** Each will be taken to account by God for what they perpetrated. This is indeed vile because it is a sin that incurs punishment both in this world and in the life to come. Furthermore, "awesome suffering awaits the one who took on himself the lead among them," to suite his role in this ghastly business.

### Two Steps for Proof

How could all this have happened in that particular community? Even today, we are surprised that such a flimsy fabrication could have circulated in that Muslim community, producing far-reaching effects and causing much pain to the noblest people on earth.

The whole episode was a battle fought by God's Messenger, the Muslim community and the Quranic message. It perhaps was the greatest battle fought by the Prophet. He emerged from it victorious, having controlled his great anguish, maintained his dignity and endured it all patiently. Not a word did he utter to indicate weakness or impatience. Yet he was experiencing the worst pain he ever endured

in his life. He further recognized that the risks to which the Quranic message was exposed as a result of this falsehood were among the worst it had to face at any time.

Yet had the Muslims then searched in their own hearts, they would have found the right answer. Had they applied simple natural logic, they would have been rightly guided. The Quran directs all Muslims to follow this proper approach when they face such difficulties. It is the first step in arriving at the right conclusion: *Why not when you heard about it, thought not the ones who are male believers and the ones who are female believers the better of themselves and have said: This is a clear calumny?* **(24:12)**

Both reports suggest that some Muslims at least searched their own hearts and ruled out the possibility that the false story suggested. They dismissed any notion that Ayisha or the Prophet's Companion could have committed such a grave sin and been unfaithful to the Prophet, and recognized how utterly flimsy the basis of the whole accusation was. This is the first step in the approach the Quran outlines for dealing with such matters; it seeks evidence from within people's consciences. The second step is to produce material evidence: *Why brought they not about four witnesses for it? As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God, those, they are the ones who lie.* **(24:13)**

This blatant fabrication targeted the highest position in the Muslim community and the purest people. Hence, it should not have been allowed to circulate casually without supporting evidence. Hence the requirement: *As they bring not about witnesses, then, with God, those, they are the ones who lie* **(24:13)** They certainly did not produce any witnesses. Hence, they were, in God's judgement, liars. God never alters His verdict or modifies His decision. Thus, this description of those people as liars remains always true of them, and they cannot escape it in any situation.

Thus we have two steps in the approach of the Quranic message: searching in our own hearts and basing our decision on firm and clear evidence. But the Muslim community at the time overlooked both steps, allowing the liars to speak ill of the Prophet and his honor. This was serious indeed and it could have landed the Muslim community in serious trouble, had it not been for God's grace. Therefore, God warns the Muslims never to fall into such a trap again: *If it not were for the grace of God on you and His mercy in the present and in the world to come, certainly, would have afflicted you a tremendous punishment for what you muttered.* **(24:14)**

## WHEN FALSEHOOD CIRCULATES

God wanted this to be a very hard lesson for the fledgling Muslim community, but in His compassion He did not inflict any punishment on them. The offense itself merited stiff punishment because of the pain it caused the Prophet, his wife, close friend and his other Companions of whom he knew nothing but good. It also merited a punishment equal to the evil that circulated within the Muslim community, violating all its sacred values, and equal to the hypocrites' wickedness whose scheme aimed to undermine the Quranic message by raising doubts about God, the Prophet and the Muslim community itself. This continued for a whole month which was a time of doubt, worry and confusion. But God's grace was forthcoming, and He bestowed His mercy on those who were in error after having learnt their bitter lesson.

The chapter gives us a picture of the period, when standards and values were placed on the wrong footing, and the community lost sight of its principles: *When you received it on your tongues and said with your mouths of what there is no knowledge, you assume it insignificant while it is serious with God.* **(24:15)** The picture painted here is one of recklessness and irresponsibility, showing little care for even the most serious of matters.

*When you received it on your tongues.* **(24:15)** One tongue picks it up from another paying little heed to what is being said. There was an utter lack of proper examination of the report, as though people repeated it without ever thinking of its significance. You *and said with your mouths of what there is no knowledge.* **(24:15)** It is just like that: a mouth utterance without thought or consideration. Mere idle talk uttered and circulated even before it is understood. They thought it a light matter, although it was an accusation against God's Messenger's personal honor, causing him, his wife and household great pain. It was an accusation against Abu Bakr's family which suffered no similar trouble even in pre-Islamic days when moral values were of little importance. This false story also accused another Companion of the Prophet who laid his life down for the defense of the Quranic message. It further had negative implications concerning the care God took of His Messenger. Yet, still they circulated the false rumor *you assume it insignificant while it is serious with God.* **(24:15)** Nothing could be described as grave in God's sight unless it is so serious that it shakes firm mountains and disturbs the heavens and earth.

A matter of such seriousness should have made people shudder just on hearing it. They should have been reluctant even to refer to it, and certainly been unwilling to accept it as a subject of conversa-

tion. They should have looked to God to protect His Messenger. Such falsehood should have been cast aside immediately: *And why, when you heard it, said you not: It will not be for us to assert this. Glory be to Thee! This is a serious false charge to harm the reputation of another.* **(24:16)**

When the matter has thus been clarified, and those early Muslims were taken aback by the enormity of the affair and their role in it, they were given a very stern warning for the future: *God admonishes you that you shall never revert to the like of it, if you had been ones who believe.* **(24:17)**

The warning comes in the form of an admonition so as to be educative, choosing the time when the Muslim community is at its most receptive. But the admonition carries at the same time an implicit warning, and attaches their being believers to the heeding of this warning. Believers cannot retain their faith if they revert to the same type of action after they have been shown its enormity and after they have been given such a warning. *And He makes manifest for you the signs.* **(24:18)** He has certainly shown the story to be plainly false, exposing the scheming behind it. He has also made plain the errors involved in this matter. *And God is Knowing, Wise.* He knows motives, intentions, objectives, thoughts and feelings. His method of bringing out the best in people and providing proper restrictions and controls to set the community's life right testifies to His wisdom.

### FURTHER WARNINGS, MORE GRACE

The chapter further elaborates its comments on this falsehood and its effects, repeating its warning against anything that may be of a similar nature. It reminds the Muslims of God's grace and mercy, warning those who falsely accuse chaste women of committing indecency that they expose themselves to God's punishment in the life to come. It also purges people's hearts of the remaining effects of this confrontation, frees them of earthly restrictions and restores their purity.

*Truly, those who love that indecency be spread about those who believed, they will have a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come.* **(24:19)** The ones who accused chaste women of adultery, particularly those who made their accusations against the Prophet's own family, really aimed to undermine the values of goodness, chastity and fidelity, so as to make it easier for people to commit adultery by implying that it was common practice. When people begin to think of it in this light, it will be practised more frequently.

This is the reason for describing the false accusers of chaste women as people who love to spread indecency among the believers.

Hence they are warned against a very severe suffering both in this life and in the life to come.

It is an aspect of the Quranic method of educating the Muslim community and a measure of prevention based on perfect knowledge of how people react and formulate their attitudes, feelings and lines of action. Therefore, the comment at the end of the sign asserts: *And God knows and you know not.* Who knows the human heart better than the One who created it? Who can provide humanity with a better code of living than the One who originated it? Who sees what is concealed as well as what is left in the open, and whose knowledge encompasses all things and situations?

Once again the chapter reminds the believers of the grace God bestows on them: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, you would be ruined, and that God is Gentle, Compassionate.* **(24:20)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it,

elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.

## Lesson 102(3). Critical Thinking Strategy

### Thinking Precisely About Thinking

An essential requirement of critical thinking is the ability to think about thinking, to engage in what is sometimes called "meta-cognition." One possible definition of critical thinking is the art of thinking about your thinking while you're thinking in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, more fair. It is precisely at the level of "thinking about thinking" that most critical thinking stands in contrast to uncritical thinking. Critical thinkers can analyze thought—take it apart and put it together again. For the uncritical, thoughts are "just there". "I think what I think, don't ask me why." The analytical vocabulary in the English language (such terms as assume, infer, conclude, criteria, point of view: relevance: issue, elaborate, ambiguous, objection, support, bias, justify, perspective, contradiction, consistent, credibility, evidence, interpret, distinguish) enables us to think more precisely about our thinking. We are in a better position to assess reasoning (our own, as well as that of others) when we can use analytic vocabulary with accuracy and ease.

### Quranic Examples of Thinking Precisely About Thinking

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not cre-*

*ated this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

### WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur)
## Signs 24:12-24:26

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Follow not in the steps of Satan.*
*And whoever follows in the steps of Satan,*
*then, truly, he commands depravity,*
*and that which is unlawful.*
*And if it were not for the grace of God on you*
*and His mercy,*
*none of you would ever be pure in heart,*
*but God makes pure whom He wills.*
*And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (24:21)
*Let those imbued with grace not forswear*
*—and those with plenty among you—*
*to give to those imbued with kinship*
*and to the needy and the ones who emigrate in the way of God.*
*And let them pardon and let them overlook.*
*Love you not that God should forgive you?*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:22)
*Truly, those who accuse*
*the ones who are free, unwary, chaste female believers*
*were cursed in the present and the world to come*
*and for them will be a serious punishment* (24:23)
*on a Day when their tongues bear witness*
*against them and their hands*
*and their feet as to what they had been doing.* (24:24)
*On that Day God will pay them their account in full,*
*what is their just due.*
*And they will know that God,*
*He is The Clear Truth.* (24:25)
*The bad females are for the bad males and the bad males*
*are for the bad females.*
*And who are good females are for who are good males*
*and who are good males are for who are good females.*
*Those are ones declared innocent of what others say.*
*For them is forgiveness and generous provision.* (24:26)

### Commentary°

The mistake committed was grave indeed, and its evil was about to engulf the whole Muslim community, but God's grace, mercy and care prevented this evil. Hence, God reminds them of this, time after time, as He aims this to be an edifying lesson. When they realized the extent of the matter that could have engulfed them all, had it not

been for God's grace and mercy, they were told that what they did was indeed following in Satan's footsteps. They must not fall into this trap, since Satan is their avowed enemy, ever since the beginning of human life. Again they are warned against what this may entail in their life: *O those who believed! Follow not in the steps of Satan. And whoever follows in the steps of Satan, then, truly, he commands depravity, and that which is unlawful. And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, none of you would ever be pure in heart, but God makes pure whom He wills. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(24:21)**

Nothing but a terrible fate awaits the believers if they take just one step with Satan. They should steer away from him altogether and follow a different way. The very thought of following Satan is repugnant to believers. Hence, drawing it in this way and holding it in front of them should make them always alert. *And whoever follows in the steps of Satan, then, truly, he commands depravity, and that which is unlawful..* **(24:21)** This false story is a stark and gruesome example of how Satan leads believers to something evil.

The human being is weak, susceptible to desires and whims which may leave him stained, unless he benefits by God's grace when he turns to Him and follows His guidance: *And if it were not for the grace of God on you and His mercy, none of you would ever be pure in heart, but God makes pure whom He wills. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(24:21)** When God's light shines in a believer's heart, it purifies it. It is only through God's favors and grace that people grow in purity. Since God knows all and hears all, He certainly knows the ones who deserve to be purified and who are genuinely good. It is these that He helps to grow in purity.

### ATTAINING THE SUBLIME

Within the context of purity, the chapter calls on believers to forgive one another as they love to be forgiven their sins: *Let those imbued with grace not forswear—and those with plenty among you—to give to those imbued with kinship and to the needy and the ones who emigrate in the way of God. And let them pardon and let them overlook.* **(24:22)**

Now we see how one of the souls touched by God's light grows in purity attaining a truly sublime standard. Ab Bakr, who was so deeply hurt by the false rumors targeting his daughter and attempting to disgrace his family, responded to the Quranic call on the believers to forgive those who hurt them. He reflected on the inspiring question, *Love you not that God should forgive you? And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:22)** And he rose above the pain and injury,

and also above the logic that prevailed in his environment. He felt there could only be one answer to that question, and with certainty and contentment he said: "Yes, indeed. I love that God should forgive me." He reinstated the allowance he had been giving Mistah, and vowed anew that he would never stop it in future. His vow replaced his earlier one that he would not give him anything.

The forgiveness of which God reminds the believers is granted only to those who repent of their errors, accusing chaste women of adultery and spreading corruption in the Muslim community. On the other hand, those who, like Ibn Ubayy, deliberately, and out of malice, make such accusations, will have no pardon or forgiveness. Even though they may escape punishment in this world, because no witnesses will testify against them, they will inevitably endure the punishment in the hereafter when no witnesses will be required.

*Truly, those who accuse the ones who are free, unwary, chaste female believers were cursed in the present and the world to come and for them will be a serious punishment on a Day when their tongues bear witness against them and their hands and their feet as to what they had been doing. On that Day God will pay them their account in full, what is their just due. And they will know that God, He is The Clear Truth.* **(24:23-24:25)**

The chapter paints their crime in stark colors so as to expose its odious nature. It is an accusation against chaste women believers who go about their lives, totally oblivious to any possibility of accusation. They behave naturally, not thinking that they will be accused of something, simply because they have done nothing wrong. To accuse them of immorality is thus seen to be very serious, betraying the contemptible and mean nature of their accusers. Hence, they are cursed now by God, and expelled from among those who receive His grace in this present life and in the life to come. The chapter then shows us a fascinating scene: *on a Day when their tongues bear witness against them and their hands and their feet as to what they had been doing.* **(24:24)** Thus we see them accusing one another, just as they used to accuse chaste believing women. The contrast is very clear, as is always the case in the Quran.

*On that Day God will pay them their account in full, what is their just due.* **(24:25)** Their deeds will be accurately reckoned and they will be given all that they really deserve. At that time they will he certain of what they used to be in doubt about. *And they will know that God, He is The Clear Truth.* **(24:25)**

The chapter concludes its comments on this whole story of falsehood by highlighting God's justice in the way He has given man his nature so as to manifest itself in practice. This is why the corrupt will

unite with their like and the good will associate with others of their type. This is how relations are consolidated between husband and wife. Hence, it is absolutely impossible that Ayisha could be like what her accusers said of her, because she was destined to be the wife of the best person that ever lived.

*The bad females are for the bad males and the bad males are for the bad females. And who are good females are for who are good males and who are good males are for who are good females. Those are ones declared innocent of what others say. For them is forgiveness and generous provision.* **(24:26)**

Good men and women are, by their very nature: *Those are ones declared innocent of what others say.* **(24:26)** False accusations cannot stick to them. *For them is forgiveness and generous provision.* **(24:26)** They will be forgiven any mistake they may commit, and they have their reward with God, clearly indicating their high position with Him.

Thus the chapter concludes its comments on this serious trial for the Muslim community because it aimed at undermining their trust that the Prophet's household was absolutely pure and that God would not allow anyone but the most pure to be a member of that household. God wanted this episode to be an edifying lesson for the Muslim community, elevating it to an even more sublime standard.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran
The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 102(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
## SIGNS 24:27-24:34

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Enter not houses other than your houses*
*until you announced your presence*
*and greeted the people within.*
*That is better for you*
*so that perhaps you will recollect.* (24:27)
*And if you find not in it anyone,*
*then, enter them not until permission be given to you.*
*And if it was said to you: Return, then, return.*

*It is purer for you.*
*And God is Knowing of what you do.* (24:28)
*There is no blame on you in entering houses*
*without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment.*
*And God knows what you show and what you keep back.* (24:29)
*Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight*
*and keep their private parts safe.*
*That is purer for them.*
*Truly God is Aware of what they craft.* (24:30)
*And say to the females, ones who believe*
*to lower their (f) sight and keep their (f) private parts safe*
*and show not their (f) adornment*
*but what is manifest of it.*
*And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms;*
*and not show their (f) adornment*
*but to their (f) husbands or their (f) fathers*
*or the fathers of their (f) husbands or their sons*
*or the sons of their (f) husbands or their (f) brothers*
*or the sons of their (f) brothers*
*or the sons of their (f) sisters or their (f) women,*
*or what their (f) right hands possessed,*
*or the ones who heed,*
*imbued with no sexual desire among the men*
*or small male children to whom was not manifest*
*nakedness of women.*
*And let them (f) not stomp their feet*
*so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment.*
*And turn to God altogether for forgiveness.*
*O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper.* (24:31)
*And wed the single among you*
*to the ones in accord with morality*
*of your male bond servants*
*and your female bond servants.*
*If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.*
*And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (24:32)
*Let those who find not the means for marriage*
*have restraint until God enriches them of His grace.*
*And for those who are looking for emancipation*
*from among what your right hands possessed,*
*contract with them if you knew good in them.*
*And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you.*
*Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will*
*to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity,*

*that you be looking for the advantage of this present life.*
*And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will,*
*yet after their (f) compulsion,*
*God will be of them (f), the female,*
*Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:33)
*And, certainly, We caused to descend to you*
*manifest signs and a parable*
*of those who passed away before you*
*and an admonishment*
*for ones who are God-conscious.* (24:34)

## COMMENTARY°

We mentioned previously that in the clean and healthy society it establishes, the Quranic message does not rely on punishment; rather its main line of defense is prevention. It does not suppress natural desires. It regulates them within a clean atmosphere that is free of deliberate stimulation. The main element in the Quranic method of educating its followers is to reduce the chances of error, eliminate temptation, and remove all impediments that prevent the satisfaction of natural desires in a perfectly natural and clean way.

It is in this light that we should look at the way the Quranic message accords a certain sanctity for homes. When they are at home, people should not be surprised by strangers coming in without first asking leave to enter. Otherwise, people's privacy would be invaded when they least expect it. In addition, the Quranic message requires both men and women to lower their gaze and not expose what may arouse sexual desire.

From the same perspective, the Quranic message facilitates marriage for poor men and women, because marriage is the best guarantee against adultery. It prohibits sending slaves into prostitution, because prostitution encourages people to indulge in prohibited sex. Let us now consider these points in more detail.

### BEFORE ENTERING A HOUSE

*O those who believed! Enter not houses other than your houses until you announced your presence and greeted the people within. That is better for you so that perhaps you will recollect. And if you find not in it anyone, then, enter them not until permission be given to you. And if it was said to you: Return, then, return. It is purer for you. And God is Knowing of what you do. There is no blame on you in entering houses without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment. And God knows what you show and what you keep back.* **(24:27-24:29)**

God has made homes places of comfort where people may relax and enjoy privacy and reassurance. At home, they do not feel the need to be cautious or on the alert. Thus, they may relax and take things easy. But homes cannot be so unless their privacy is strictly respected. No one may enter a home without its occupier's knowledge and permission, at the time they choose, and in the manner they prefer.

Should we be able to go into other people's homes without first seeking permission, we may see them in situations they want to keep private, or we may see what arouses desire and opens the way to error. This could come about through a chance meeting, or a casual glance. When these are repeated, they become deliberate, motivated by the desires aroused by the casual glance in the first place. It may even develop into a sinful relation or cause a suppressed desire leading to a psychological problem.

In pre-Quranic days in Arabia, visitors used to enter a home and then announce themselves. It could be that inside a man may be with his wife in a position they did not want anyone to see; or that the man or woman were undressed. All this used to hurt people, and deprived them of a sense of security at home. Furthermore, when visitors saw charm and beauty, temptation might be strong or even irresistible.

For all such reasons, God laid down the requirement to observe fine manners, making it necessary for a Muslim to announce himself and greet the people inside before entering. This establishes a friendly atmosphere right from the first moment.

*O those who believed! Enter not houses other than your houses until you announced your presence and greeted the people within. That is better for you so that perhaps you will recollect.* **(24:27)** Seeking permission is expressed in the Arabic original in an unusual way which implies friendliness. Thus we may say that we should not enter other people's houses until we have obtained friendly and cordial permission. This implies that the visitor should be gentle in his approach so as to be welcomed by the people inside. Such refinement is characteristic of Quranic manners.

When permission is sought, it follows that the house is either empty or people are inside. If there is no one in, then the caller cannot enter, because entry follows permission. *If you find not in it anyone, then enter them not until permission is given to you.* **(24:28)** But if there is someone in, seeking permission is not enough for entry. It is merely a request, and if the request is not granted, entry is prohibited. It is better to leave without delay: *And if it was said to you: Return, then, return. It is purer for you.* **(24:28)** The person who is told to go

back should do so without feeling upset or offended. People have their secrets and they may have good reason for not receiving a visitor at a particular time. It is up to them to determine their own situation. *And God is Knowing of what you do.* **(24:28)** He knows people's secrets and motives.

### VISITING PEOPLE WHEN THEY ARE NOT READY

Places that are more or less public, like hotels, guest houses and reception halls which are separate from the main house are treated differently. We may enter such places without first seeking permission, because the very reason for seeking permission before entry does not apply to them. Requiring permission first may be inconvenient in such places.

*There is no blame on you in entering houses without ones who are inhabitants wherein you have enjoyment. And God knows what you show and what you keep back.* **(24:29)** The point here is that of God's knowledge of all our situations and what we do in public or private. The feeling that God watches us in all situations should make people more obedient and willing to observe the refined manners which He has outlined in His book that lays down a code of living for all humanity.

As a complete code for human life, the Quran emphasizes this point of detail in social life because it aims to regulate life in all its aspects, bringing its details in line with its fundamental issues. Thus, seeking permission before entering other people's homes respects the sanctity which makes the home a place of relaxation. It spares its people the embarrassment of being taken by surprise, or being seen in a situation that they prefer not to be seen in. We are not talking here only about the parts of the human body which should be covered. At home people may be in a situation which they simply do not like others to see. It could relate to their personal appearance, the way they dress or lay their furniture, or anything else. It could also relate to feelings and emotions. Who of us would like to be seen in a situation of weakness, crying or angry or in pain or distress?

The Quranic code of manners attends to all these details through the requirement of seeking permission before entering someone else's home. It also seeks to reduce chances of casual meetings or sightings that could arouse desire and develop into unacceptable relations that Satan may stealthily encourage. The first Muslim community to be addressed by the Quran clearly understood such directives and their purpose. The Prophet himself was the first to implement them.

## GOOD MANNERS AND HIGH MORALS

Such refined manners were characteristic of the Prophet and his Companions after God had taught them the Quranic way. Today, however, we find that such fine considerations are largely meaningless despite our being Muslims. A man may just turn up at his brother's door at any time of the day or night, knocking hard and caring little for disturbing the people inside, until the door is opened. The people may have a telephone which provides an excellent way of seeking permission to visit before starting out. He could thus easily find out a time suitable to his hosts. Nevertheless, people simply do not take such steps. A man may arrive at someone's home without a prior appointment or permission. What is worse, our social tradition makes it imperative that a visitor who has come unannounced be received, even though his visit might be extremely inconvenient.

We are certainly Muslims, but we surprise our friends at any moment, even at meal times. If we are not invited to a meal, we may feel aggrieved. We may even surprise them late at night, and if they do not invite us to stay the night, we are offended. We allow our hosts no excuses either way.

All this takes place simply because we neglect Islamic manners. We do not bring our own preferences in line with what has been taught by God's Messenger. We insist on following a mistaken social tradition that has no divine authority.

We look at other, non-Muslim communities and find that their social traditions are closer to the values and manners Islam wants us to adopt. Sometimes we admire these, but at other times we may even ridicule them, without even trying to look into what Islam wants us to do.

## PROPER CONTROL OF A NATURAL DESIRE

Having dealt with the proper manners of entering homes after taking permission, the chapter moves on to prevent desire from running loose. It simply prevents looking at what is bound to excite desire, and it prohibits action that encourages sin.

*Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight and keep their private parts safe. That is purer for them. Truly God is Aware of what they craft. And say to the females, ones who believe to lower their (f) sight and keep their (f) private parts safe and show not their (f) adornment but what is manifest of it. And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms; and not show their (f) adornment but to their (f) husbands or their (f) fathers or the fathers of their (f) husbands or their sons or the sons of their (f) husbands or their (f) brothers or the sons of their (f) brothers or the sons of their*

*(f) sisters or their (f) women, or what their (f) right hands possessed, or the ones who heed, imbued with no sexual desire among the men or small male children to whom was not manifest nakedness of women. And let them (f) not stomp their feet so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment. And turn to God altogether for forgiveness. O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(24:30-24:31)**

Islam wants to establish a clean society where desire is not aroused at every moment, and erotic scenes are not displayed everywhere. Continual excitement of the sexual urge leads to an insatiable desire that may become unstoppable. A stealthy look, a seductive move, flagrant make-up and thinly-dressed bodies are meant only to add to such insatiable and uncontrolled excitement. Thus, prudence and self control are heavily taxed. Therefore, there remains one of two alternatives: either total permissiveness that disregards all checks and values, or psychological problems and disorders that result from having to suppress a desire that has been strongly aroused. This borders on unmitigated torture.

One way the Quranic message uses for achieving its goal of establishing a clean human society is to prevent such uncontrollable excitement of the sexual urge. It wants the natural sexual urge, of both men and women, to remain healthy, maintaining its natural strength and to satisfy it in the proper, clean manner.

At some point in time, the idea was promoted that easy mixing between the two sexes, playful conversation and revealing physical attractions help to provide a relaxed social atmosphere, with no rigid inhibitions. It was said that this is necessary as a preventive measure against arbitrary suppression of natural desires and psychological complexes and disorders. It reduces the pressure of the sexual urge and prevents an uncontrollable explosion, etc.

Attraction to the other sex is both natural and profound, because God has made it the means by which human life continues and by which man can fulfil his task on earth. It is a permanent attraction that subsides for a while and then regains strength. To stir it at all times will undoubtedly keep it on the boil. Thus, it requires physical satisfaction. If this does not take place, tension will rise and man finds himself in a sort of permanent torture. Excitement takes place through a look, a move, a smile, a joke and even the tone in one's speech. The best safeguard is to reduce such excitement so that the mutual attraction between man and woman remains within its natural limits, and finds its satisfaction in the proper and natural way. This is the line the Quranic message prefers.

The two signs we are now discussing give us some examples of

how Islam helps to reduce the chances of excitement and sin: *Say to the males, ones who believe, to lower their sight and keep their private parts safe.* **(24:30)**

Lowering their gaze is an act of refining men's manners. It represents an attempt to rise above the desire to look at women's physical charms. As such, it is a practical step to ensure that the first window of temptation is shut. Minding their chastity is the natural result of lowering their gaze. It is indeed the second step that comes after strengthening one's will and rising above the natural urge right at the beginning. Therefore, the two are stated in the same sign as a cause and effect, or as two consecutive steps both in personal conscience and in reality.

*That is purer for them.* **(24:30)** It ensures that their feelings remain pure, unaffected by licentious desire and promiscuous action. Thus, feelings retain their noble human standards, and do not sink to animal levels. This protects honor, integrity and sanctities within the community. Besides, it is God who lays down such preventive measures, fully aware as He certainly is of people's psychology, natural instincts thoughts and motives: *Truly God is Aware of what they craft.*

*And say to the females, ones who believe to lower their (f) sight.* **(24:31)** They must not cast hungry or seductive looks at men to arouse their desire. Nor are they permitted any sexual behavior other than what is lawful and clean. Thus, children that are born as a result will have nothing to be ashamed of when they have to face society and play their roles in it.

*And keep their (f) private parts safe and show not their (f) adornment but what is manifest of it.* **(24:31)** The Arabic term *zinah*, translated here as 'adornment', has wider connotations than natural beauty. It includes adornments women add to look more attractive. Such adornments are lawful for women to use, because they satisfy a natural female tendency that makes women always want to look beautiful and attractive. Such adornments differ from one time to another, but whatever form they take, they are meant to satisfy the same natural motive of appearing more beautiful and displaying charms before men.

### PROMPT COMPLIANCE WITH DIVINE ORDERS

A further instruction is given to women with regard to their public appearance: *And let them (f) draw their head coverings over their (f) bosoms.* **(24:31)** We have a translation problem here because the Quranic signs uses the term *jayb*, which does not mean 'bosom'. *Jayb* instead means the top opening of a dress which is bound to reveal a part of a woman's bosom. Therefore, women are ordered to

bring their head coverings down so as to cover this opening, thus covering their heads, necks and chests. In this way, they cover their charms so as not to be displayed before hungry eyes, not even in a sudden encounter between man and woman. A God-conscious person will always try not to make such a look last long, or repeat it. Yet, it may have a lasting effect if charms and adornments are seen suddenly. Hence, the instruction to keep them covered. What is important to realize here is that God wants to spare people this type of test.

The Quranic message has refined the tastes of a society that follows the Quranic message and its sense of beauty for it no longer seeks the lewd and licentious. Exposing bodily charms attracts a man's physical instinct. Modesty, on the other hand, shows a clean type of beauty that refines man's sense. It is the type of beauty worthy of man, because it imparts a sense of purity and chastity.

Today, the Quranic message produces the same effect among women believers, despite the fact that the general taste in society has sunk so low as to encourage the revealing of physical charms and the exposure of other parts of the human body. Nevertheless, women believers voluntarily cover themselves as God requires them to do, while other women around them try to attract men by their physical presence.

Another exception applies to POW/slaves/concubines: *or what their (f) right hands possessed.* Some scholars say that this applies to women POW/slaves only, while others include male slaves too because a slave does not look up to his mistress in a carnal way. But the first view is more logical because a POW/slave is a man with all the desire any other man has, even though he is placed in a special or unfavorable situation. Also excepted are *or the ones who heed, imbued with no sexual desire among the men* who may not be attracted to women for one reason or another, such as being impotent or feeble minded. In this case, a woman's physical beauty causes no temptation. Similarly excepted are: *or small male children to whom was not manifest nakedness of women.* These are children who do not yet feel any sexual desire because they are too young. When they are older and become sexually aware and attracted to women, even though they might not have attained their puberty, nonetheless the original rules apply to them.

All these–with the exception of husbands–may see a woman uncovered, except for the area between her waistline and knees, because the cause that prevents such looks does not apply in their case. A husband, on the other hand, may see his wife without restriction.

Since this is a preventive measure, the Quranic sign goes on to prohibit the movements a woman may make in order to attract atten-

tion to her adornments or charms that are not readily visible. Such movements may be exciting even though the adornments themselves may remain invisible.

*And let them (f) not stomp their feet so as to be known what they (f) conceal of their adornment.* **(24:31)** This order results from profound knowledge of human psychology. Sometimes, the human imagination may be a more powerful trigger for desire. Many are the men who, on seeing a woman's shoes, dress or jewellery, are more excited than by seeing her body. Many are the ones that are sexually excited by the mental image they draw of a woman than by seeing her in person. Psychiatrists have identified such cases which may need treatment. The tinkle of jewellery or the smell of perfume may excite some people and kindle their sexual desire. With some, this could become irresistible. The Quran takes effective and appropriate action against all this, because its message is sent by God the Creator who knows His creation and who is kind to, and fully aware of, them all.

The sign concludes with turning people's hearts to God, opening the door of repentance and forgiveness for all that was done before its revelation. *And turn to God altogether for forgiveness. O the ones who believe, so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(24:31)** Thus, it enhances their feelings that God watches over them, and that He is kind to them, taking care of them. He helps them overcome their weakness in respect of sexual desire. Yet nothing can bring this under proper control more effectively than faith and conscious of God.

### PROMOTING EASY MARRIAGE

Up to this point, the measures the Quran speaks about are preventive. Yet sexual attraction is very real and needs practical steps to ensure its proper control. The most important solution is marriage and the taking of positive steps to encourage it, together with making other ways of sexual response far more difficult or even totally unavailable.

*And wed the single among you to the ones in accord with morality of your male bond servants and your female bond servants. If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing. Let those who find not the means for marriage have restraint until God enriches them of His grace. And for those who are looking for emancipation from among what your right hands possessed, contract with them if you knew good in them. And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you. Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity, that you be looking for the advantage of this present*

*life. And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will, yet after their (f) compulsion, God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:32-24:33)**

Marriage is the proper way to satisfy natural sexual desires. Hence, all impediments that make marriage difficult should be removed so that human life can progress in this natural and simple way. Money is the primary impediment facing those who wish to establish families and protect themselves against sin. Hence, Islam puts in place an integrated system that does not make a requirement without providing its tools or the conditions that are conducive to its fulfilment. As it requires people to maintain their chastity, it makes marriage easy for all people. Hence only the one who deliberately turns away from the clean and pure way indulges in sin. Therefore, Islam requires the Muslim community to provide financial assistance for those who lack the wherewithal to get married: *And wed the single among you to the ones in accord with morality of your male bond servants and your female bond servants.* **(24:32)**

The order includes all those who are single, men and women, although only free people are meant here initially. Those who are in bondage are specifically mentioned later:: a*s well as such of your male and female POW/slaves as are virtuous.* They all need money for this purpose, as it is clearly understood from the rest of the sign: *If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.* **(24:32)**

This order is given to the Muslim community to enable single people to marry. The majority of scholars are of the view that this order is meant as a recommendation because there were single people during the time of the Prophet and they were not made to marry. Had this order been meant as an obligation, the Prophet would have ensured they all married. In our view, this order states an obligation, but it does not mean that a Muslim ruler is required to compel those who are single to get married.

What it means instead is that the Muslim community must help single people who wish to get married, thus enabling them to guard their chastity. The Quranic message considers this to be a practical measure of protection so that the Muslim community remains free of adultery, as it is duty bound to remain so. Providing the means to fulfil an obligation is also obligatory.

We should remember though that the Quranic message is a fully integrated system. Hence, it provides adequate measures to set the economy of the Muslim community on the right footing. Thus, it provides good job opportunities for those who are able to work, so that they do not need assistance from the treasury. However, in exceptional situations, the public treasury is required to provide such as-

sistance. This means that in the economic system of the Quranic message, everyone has an income to meet their needs. The provision of jobs giving adequate income is a duty of the Muslim state and a right owing to individual citizens. Giving financial assistance by the public treasury is the exception, not the rule.

### FINANCIAL HELP FOR MARRIAGE

When, despite all this, there remain in the community single men and women who are poor, unable to meet the expenses of marriage, the Muslim community must help them marry. The same applies to POW/slaves, of both sexes. However, this duty applies in the first place to their masters, if they can meet such expenses. Poverty should never be an impediment preventing marriage when single men or women are suitable for marriage and are willing. It is God who provides for all. He has made it clear that He will give them enough when they choose the clean and healthy way, guarding their chastity through marriage. *If they be poor, God will enrich them of His grace.* **(24:32)**

Until the Muslim community provides the necessary help to enable them to get married, single people are instructed to guard their chastity. *Let those who find not the means for marriage have restraint until God enriches them of His grace.* **(24:33)** This He certainly does, because *God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:33)** He does not stint the means of a person who wants to stick to the way of purity and chastity as He is fully aware of people's intentions.

We see how the Quranic message provides a practical solution to a real problem. Every individual who is fit to marry should be able to do so, even though he or she may lack the necessary financial ability. In most cases, money, or the lack of it, is the most difficult barrier that prevents people from getting married.

It is recognized that the presence of POW/slaves within the community allows moral standards to fall, encouraging loose moral attitudes because, generally speaking, slaves have a weaker sense of human dignity. At the same time slavery was inevitable at the advent of the Quranic message, considering the need to apply the same rules to captives of war taken by Muslims as Muslim captives received at the hands of their non-Muslim captors. Yet the Quranic message took a unilateral initiative to free POW/slaves whenever possible, until a new world order allowed for the total abolition of slavery. It is in this vein that the Quranic message required that a POW/slave who wished to buy his own freedom should be freed in return for an agreed sum of money which he paid to his master. *And for those who*

*are looking for emancipation from among what your right hands possessed, contract with them if you knew good in them.* **(24:33)**

When a POW/slave signs a deed of freedom, the money he earns through his own work belongs to him so that he can fulfil his commitment under the deed of freedom. What is more is that he can rightfully claim to be helped from *zakat* funds: *And give them of the wealth of God which He gave you.* **(24:33)** The only condition that applies in such situations is that the master should be aware that the POW/slave is a good person. The goodness that the sign refers to is that the POW/slave should be a Muslim in the first place, and that he or she should be able to earn their living through their work. A freed POW/slave should not become a liability to society, or forced to resort to degrading practices in order to survive. The Quranic message lays down a system of social security which is very practical. It does not raise empty slogans nor does it try to meet them without looking at the realities that follow. It does not merely seek to free POW/slaves without giving that freedom real meaning. POW/slaves will not achieve a real standard of freedom unless they are able to earn their living so that they neither beg nor resort to some dirty practices to survive. Some such practices are far worse than being a POW/slave.

The Quranic message frees POW/slaves in order to cleanse society, and so avoid it becoming more contaminated with vice. By the grace of God, POW/slavery has been abolished after the signing of international treaties and conventions that prohibit the enslavement of captives of war. Under the Quranic message, slavery was allowed only provisionally, on the basis of measure-for-measure in the treatment of enemy captives of war.

### FAIR TREATMENT FOR THE LEAST PRIVILEGED

What is worse than the presence of POW/slaves in the community is that some POW/slaves might be put to prostitution. In pre-Quranic days, a master might make his female POW/slaves prostitutes, taking some or all of their wages. This form of prostitution continues to be practised today. As the Quranic message wants the social environment to be pure, it forbids all adultery, particularly this form of prostitution. *Compel not your spiritual warriors (f) against their will to prostitution when they (f) wanted chastity, that you be looking for the advantage of this present life. And whoever compels them (f) to it against their (f) will, yet after their (f) compulsion, God will be of them (f), the female, Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:33)** This sign warns those who force their maids into prostitution, and rebukes them for seeking to enrich themselves in this highly im-

moral way. It also promises those who are forced to it forgiveness and mercy.

The prohibition of compelling girls, who wish to maintain their chastity, into prostitution for financial gain was part of the Quranic method of cleansing the social environment and of blocking all dirty methods of satisfying sexual desires. When prostitution is condoned in society, it tempts many people because it is so easy. When such avenues are not available, people have to seek the clean way of marriage to satisfy their natural desires.

There is no validity in the argument that prostitution works as a safety device to protect families, or that it is the only way to satisfy a natural need when marriage is difficult, or that unless such an easy way is found, people assault honorable women. This is indeed a twisted argument that confuses causes and results. Sexual desire must remain clean, pure and directed to serve the purpose of procreation, so that new generations can grow up in a clean environment. Communities must reform their economic systems so that everyone can have a reasonable standard of living which enables him or her to marry. Should there remain exceptional cases, these would be properly considered and appropriate treatment found for them. This leaves no need for prostitution, or filthy brothels where those who want to ease the pressure of their natural sexual desire can throw aside their burden, in the same way as garbage is publicly thrown over a dunghill. It is the economic system that should be reformed so as to prevent such filth from existing. The inadequacy of economic systems should never be the basis of an argument for brothels where humanity is exceedingly humiliated.

This is exactly the method the Quranic message adopts, providing an integrated system that maintains purity and helps people preserve their chastity. It is a system that provides a bridge linking this world with heaven, and elevates humanity to a sublime level that is enlightened with God's guidance.

The whole passage concludes with a sign that provides suitable comments on its subject matter: *And, certainly, We caused to descend to you manifest signs and a parable of those who passed away before you and an admonishment for ones who are God-conscious.* **(24:34)** Its signs are clear. They show the truth, leaving no room for ambiguity or distortion. It portrays the fate of earlier communities that deviated from the divine method and the punishment meted out to them. The Quran also provides an admonition for the God-conscious who realize that God watches all that we do. Thus, they stand in awe of God and they follow the right path. All the rules and the rulings outlined in this passage fit well with this comment which emphasizes

the bond between people's hearts with God Almighty who bestowed this Quran from on high.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions.** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

### How are assumptions used in the Quran?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again ac-

cording to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10) ]

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms

## LESSON 102(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES

### WHAT ARE IMPLICATIONS?

Implications follow from our thoughts.

### WHAT ARE CONSEQUENCES?

Consequences follow from our actions.

### REASONING WELL

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

### IMPLICATIONS IN REASONING

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
## SIGNS 24:35-24:40

**Madinah:** *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.*
*The parable of His Light is as a niche*
*in which there is a lamp.*
*The lamp is in a glass.*
*The glass is as if it had been a glittering star,*
*kindled from a blessed olive tree,*
*neither eastern nor western,*
*whose oil of the olive is about to illuminate*
*although no fire touches it.*
*Light on light,*
*God guides to His Light whom He wills!*
*And God propounds parables for humanity,*
*and God is Knowing of everything.* (24:35)
*The Light is lit in houses God gave permission*
*to be lifted up and that His Name be remembered in it.*

*Glorifying Him at the first part of the day and the eventide* (24:36)
*are men whom neither trade nor trading*
*diverts from the remembrance of God*
*and the performing the formal prayer*
*and the giving of purifying alms*
*for they fear a Day when the hearts will go to and fro*
*and their sight,* (24:37)
*that God gives recompense to them according to the fairer*
*of what they did*
*and increases even more for them from His grace.*
*And God provides to whom He wills without reckoning.* (24:38)
*As for those who were ungrateful,*
*their actions are like a mirage in a spacious plain.*
*The thirsty one assumes it to be water until he drew near it.*
*He finds it to be nothing.*
*Instead, he found God with him*
*Who paid his account in full,*
*reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning.* (24:39)
*Or they are like the shadows in an obscure sea,*
*overcome by a wave, above which is a wave,*
*above which are clouds, shadows, some above some others.*
*When he brought out his hand he almost sees it not.*
*And whomever God assigns no light for him,*
*there is no light for him.* (24:40)

## COMMENTARY°

So far the chapter has dealt with the most crude aspects of the human constitution in order to purify and refine them. It has dealt with sexual desire, including its different appeals, as well as the inclination to spread rumors and level accusations at people causing anger and distress. It has also dealt with indecency fermenting within people's hearts, finding verbal expression and then spreading into actual life itself. In all these it laid down very stern punishments for adultery and for false accusation of committing it. It portrayed a horrid example of false accusations levelled at chaste women who are unaware of what is being said about them. It also provided preventive measures, such as seeking permission before entering other people's homes, lowering one's gaze when meeting others, and covering personal charms and adornments. It further warned against unnecessary sexual excitement, encouraged marriage and the freedom of slaves and prohibited prostitution. All these measures, varied as they are, help to control the physical impulse and strengthen the motives to maintain one's chastity and aspire to higher standards of purity.

At the conclusion of its comments on the false story about Ayisha the chapter dealt with the lingering effects of that incident: in particular the distress, anger, distortion of values and anxiety.

With such directives, education and refinement the chapter now deals with the human soul, how it suddenly lights up, aspiring to the great light that fills the heavens and earth. Muslims are now ready to receive the enlightenment that they need in a world full of light.

### GOD'S RADIANT LIGHT

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24:35)** No sooner does this remarkable statement impart its meaning than a bright light spreads over the whole universe and lightens up feelings and emotions, filling hearts and minds. The entire universe swims in a radiant light. Screens and curtains are removed, hearts radiate, spirits fly high, and everything is purified in a sea of light. All shed their burdens and join together in an atmosphere of pure happiness and delight. Indeed, the universe and all it contains break their fetters so as to let the heavens and earth meet, the distant and the near come together, as do the animate and the inanimate. What is hidden joins with what is apparent, as do people's hearts and senses.

*God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.* He is the light from which they derive their essence as well as their perfect system. He is the One who gives them their existence and the law that governs such existence. The human being has recently been able to discover, through scientific achievements, a part of this great truth when what they used to call 'matter' was transformed, through nuclear fusion, into radiation that has no form or substance other than light. Thus, the human being discovered that an atom contains electrons that produce radiation. By contrast, the human heart was able to comprehend this great truth many centuries before science made its discoveries. Every time the human heart attained a high level of purity, aspiring to the sublime light, it was able to understand this truth. It was fully comprehended by Muhammad, God's Messenger, as he started his journey back from Taif, when he gave up on people and sought refuge with his Lord. Appealing to God Almighty, he said: I seek refuge in the light of Your face by which all darkness is dispelled and both this life and the life to come are put on their right courses. His heart shined with this sublime light on his night journey which took him from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to heaven. When later Ayisha, his wife, asked him whether he saw his Lord, he answered: It is all light. How could I see Him?

## AN EXAMPLE PORTRAYING GOD'S LIGHT

The human heart cannot take such abundant light for long; nor can it aspire to that great horizon for long. Therefore, after this statement that opens up this endless scope, the chapter begins to bring it closer so as to make it better understood. The example is at once tangible and practical:

*The parable of His Light is as a niche in which there is a lamp. The lamp is in a glass. The glass is as if it had been a glittering star, kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither eastern nor western, whose oil of the olive is about to illuminate although no fire touches it. Light on light.* **(24:35)**

This comparison seeks to put the infinite right before a mind that has finite ability. It simply portrays a miniscule picture to present it to the human being who cannot contemplate its great reality. It seeks to show the nature of light when the human imagination cannot entertain its endless spread.

The sign begins by stating the fact that *God is the Light of the heavens and the earth* but then it brings us fast from this great expanse to a niche, a small artificial wall recess in which a lamp is placed so as to focus its light and make it shine. *The parable of His Light is as a niche in which there is a lamp.* It adds one element of strength and concentration after another: *The lamp is in a glass* which protects it from the wind and purifies its light to make it stronger and more radiant: *The glass is as if it had been a glittering star.* We see the glass painted here as bright, transparent, almost shining. At this point the sign links the example and the reality, the likeness and the original, the small glass and the radiant star. Thus we do not concentrate our reflection on the miniscule picture which is presented only to help us understand the great reality.

The chapter immediately reverts to the small example of the lamp, which is *kindled from a blessed olive tree.* The purest light known to the first people addressed by the Quran was that of olive oil. But this is not the only reason for choosing this example. It is an example that has connotations of sacredness associated with the blessed tree. These connotations recall the image of the sacred valley, the nearest place to Arabia in which olive trees grow in abundance. The Quran refers to this tree and gives it special significance: *And a tree that goes forth from Mount Sinai that bears oil and it is a seasoning for the ones who eat it.* **(23:19-23:20)** It is a tree that lives for ages, and it brings endless benefits to the human being through its oil, wood, leaves and fruit. Once again the text turns from the little example to remind us of the great reality. This tree is not a particular one, and it does not belong to a particular place or direction. It is

merely an example given to make the reality easier to understand. Hence, it is described as *neither of the east nor of the west.* Moreover, its oil is not the one we see and know. It is different and far more remarkable: *Its very oil would almost give light even though no fire had touched it.* It is so transparent and bright that it almost gives light without burning. The example concludes with another remarkable statement: *Light upon light.* Thus, we are back with the original light that bears no comparison. It is God's light that dispels all darkness in the heavens and the earth. It is a light whose nature and scope are beyond our comprehension. The aim here is to make our hearts aspire to see this light: *God guides to His Light whom He wills!* **(24:35)** Those who open their hearts to the light will see it because it spreads far and wide in the heavens and the earth. It is permanent, unending, unscreened, and it never fades. Whenever the human heart looks for it, it is sure to find it. In the midst of his confusion, man can always find it providing guidance and establishing a bond between him and his Lord.

This comparison is given by God so as to make our minds able to comprehend the nature of His light. He alone knows the full extent of our ability:*And God propounds parables for humanity, and God is Knowing of everything.* **(24:35)**

This light which spreads in abundance in the heavens and earth is best seen in perfect clarity in the houses of God where people's hearts look up to Him, remember Him, stand in awe of Him and dedicate themselves to Him in preference to all else:

In houses which God has sanctioned to be raised so that His name be remembered in them, there are such as extol His limitless glory, morning and evening–people whom neither commerce nor profit can divert from the remembrance of God, and from attending regularly to formal prayer, and from charity; who are filled with fear of the day when all hearts and eyes will be convulsed; who only hope that God may reward them in accordance with the best that they ever did, and lavish His grace upon them. God gives to whom He wills beyond all reckoning. **(24:36-24:38)**

There is a close affinity between the scene of the niche in the first sign and the following scene of God's houses. This is perfectly in line with the Quranic method of putting together images that have close parallels. Likewise, there is close affinity between the lamp shining with light in the niche and hearts shining with the light of glorifying God in His houses.

When God sanctions something, it takes place just as He has approved. Since He has sanctioned the raising of these houses, they are there, functioning, purified and respected. The view showing them

standing tall is in harmony with God's light that radiates throughout the heavens and the earth. These houses are naturally noble which again fits perfectly with the brilliant light described earlier. Their special, venerated position makes them fit for the remembrance of God's name: *The Light is lit in houses God gave permission to be lifted up and that His Name be remembered in it.* **(24:36)** They are also in harmony with the radiant hearts of the believers who stand up in formal prayer, glorify God and extol His praises. They are *men whom neither trade nor trading diverts from the remembrance of God and the performing the formal prayer and the giving of purifying alms.* **(24:37)** Needless to say, trade and commerce aim to make a profit. Yet although these believers are engaged in such enterprises, they are not diverted from their obligation towards God or their fellow human beings. Therefore, they attend regularly and properly to their formal prayers and pay their *zakat* and charity. These people *for they fear a Day when the hearts will go to and fro and their sight.* **(24:37)** On that day, people's hearts and eyes will be in turmoil, unsteady. It is a day of utter fear and distress. Therefore, they fear what may happen to them then. In order to spare themselves, they are never diverted by their immediate concerns of business and profit from attending to their duties towards their Lord.

Yet despite their fear, they have high hopes *that God gives recompense to them according to the fairer of what they did and increases even more for them from His grace.* **(24:38)** Their hopes will never be frustrated; for: *God provides to whom He wills without reckoning.* **(24:38)** There are no limits to God's favors and no restrictions on what He may wish to bestow on His devoted servants.

### DEEDS THAT COME TO NOTHING

In contrast to this radiant light that shines throughout the heavens and the earth, focusing on the houses dedicated to God and enlightening the hearts of the faithful, the chapter shows a different situation where no light can penetrate and no one is safe; a situation devoid of all goodness. That is the situation in which the unbelievers find themselves:

As for the ungrateful, their deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty traveller supposes to be water, but when he comes near to it, he finds that it is nothing. *As for those who were ungrateful, their actions are like a mirage in a spacious plain. The thirsty one assumes it to be water until he drew near it. He finds it to be nothing. Instead, he found God with him Who paid his account in full, reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning.* **(24:39)**

This is the first of two remarkable scenes the chapter paints of

the ungrateful and their destiny. Both are full of life and movement. In this scene their actions are shown like a mirage in an open space. It gives a false shine which attracts the thirsty traveller who moves towards it. He is totally unaware of what he might find there, other than the prospect of quenching his thirst. Suddenly, the whole scene moves swiftly, and we see the thirsty traveller arriving at this place but finding no water to drink. Instead, he is in for a great surprise, one which he could never have imagined. It is awesome, striking fear into his heart and leaving him utterly bewildered. What he finds is the realization that God has always been present with him. He had denied God's existence, turned his back on Him and adopted a hostile attitude to faith. In his state of total oblivion to anything other than the water he needs, should he find there a human adversary, he would be startled and confused. But he finds no human opponent. He finds God Almighty who takes him to account.

And then what happens? *He found God with him Who paid his account in full* All this occurs very quickly, in line with the initial and sudden shock. The final comment on this scene is *reckoning and God is Swift at reckoning.* Again the comment perfectly suits the rapidity of the scene.

In the second scene layers of darkness gather on top of each other, to contrast with the false brightness of the mirage. Great fear is transmitted by the bottomless ocean engulfed in darkness, and waves upon waves moving in a never-ending motion. Above all this, dark clouds gather. Thus, layers of darkness amass, to the extent that if someone were to hold out their hand, they would fail to see it in the engulfing darkness. Hence it is a darkness that spreads an air of fear and panic.

This is all a description of unbelief, which is shown as darkness totally isolated from the divine light that radiates throughout the universe. It is a deep error which prevents people from seeing even the nearest sign of guidance, a fear that leaves no trace of security. For, *indeed the one from whom God withholds light shall find no light at all.* **(24:40)** God's light is guidance planted in people's hearts, giving them an informed insight, and a bond between human nature and the laws that operate in the universe at large. It is the only true enlightenment. A person who is cut off from this light remains in a darkness that cannot be removed, in a fear without security, and in error without return. At the end he finds all his actions to be a mirage leading him to ruin. No action is valid unless it is based on faith. There is no guidance without faith, and no light unless it is God's light.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?
What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:

Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

## INTERLUDE: THE BATTLE OF THE TRENCH

The Nadir tribe is bent on getting its property back. The leaders learn that the Quraysh are planning a final attack against the Muslims so they secretly send leaders from Khaybar to the pagans. The pagans ask them: You are People of the Book and you are aware of our differences with Muhammad. Is our creed of idolatry better than the creed of Muhammad? The Nadir tribal leader says: Your creed is better and you are much more worthy. The Jews are monotheists and for monotheists to hypocritically accept idolatry is infidelity (*kufr*) to the One God.

The Nadir join forces with the pagans along with the Kinanah and Asad, people of the coastlands (Tihamah), the Ghatafan of Najd, the Hawazin and the Sulayman. This will be the last attempt of the idolaters to destroy the Messenger and his Community. News that the Quraysh army of 10,000 men and 300 horses have left Makkah for Madinah takes four days to reach him. He only has one week to prepare his defenses.

The Messenger then sends out word to all of the surrounding area that an attack is imminent, that they should have patience, fear God, and obey orders. He then calls for a counsel of the Companions to seek their opinions as to the best method of defense. After several suggestions, Salman, one of the recent Companions, offers a suggestion.

Salman is a Persian slave who had been purchased by a Jew of the Qurayzah tribe. From the time the Messenger had arrived in Madinah and Salman had met him, he had wanted to join the Muslim Companions but the price for his freedom had been set by the Jewish Qurayzah leader at the planting of 300 palm trees and gold. While Abu Sufyan had been preparing his army in Makkah, joining forces with the Jewish Nadir tribe and others, Salman in Madinah had been in contact with the Messenger to seek his help in buying his freedom. The Messenger had asked the Companions to help Salman plant the date palms. The Companions dig out the ground and the Messenger himself placed the saplings in the earth. When this had been completed, the Messenger had given Salman a piece of gold. His price complete, Salman had been set free.

Now he is a Companion of the Messenger of God and offers a suggestion in the council meeting in regard to defending Madinah. He says: Oh Messenger of God, in Persia whenever we had feared an attack of horses, we would surround ourselves with a trench. Let's dig a trench as a defense. Everyone agrees that this is the best approach to take.

Each group in the Community is made responsible for a section of the trench. The Messenger himself works with them. It takes six days to complete. Abu Sufyan arrives at the head of the pagan forces. He and his army are surprised when they see the Muslim archers on the other side of a wide trench which had not been there before. After they receive a barrage of arrows, they withdraw to a safe distance and consult with one another. A member of the Nadir tribe's forces suggests Abu Sufyan speak to the Qurayzah tribe whose

fortress blocks the approach to Madinah from the south-east. They seek their agreement in order to be able to attack Madinah from two directions.

The Messenger prepares the 3000 strong Muslim army for the attack. He hears that the Qurayzah tribe have broken their treaty with him. He fears for the Muslim women and children and sends Zayd and 300 men, needed for the trench, to patrol the streets at night. They do so with cries of: *Allahu akbar*, God is Greater throughout the night.

The attack continues night and day. They remember Uhud and do not want to be caught negligent. With little to eat, a scarce water supply, and long hours vigil behind the trench, shooting arrows at the enemy as he tries to cross the trench, the Messenger feels perhaps he can break the ranks of the enemy by offering the Ghatafan tribe one-third of the dates of Madinah for one year if they withdraw. The Ghatafan tribe had been promised half the date harvest of Khaybar by Abu Sufyan to join against the Muslims. When the Messenger tells the Helpers of his plan to have the Bani Ghatafan break their ranks, Saad ibn Muadth says,: Oh Messenger of God, is this a command of God or do you do this for our sake? The Messenger answers: It is something I do for your sake and by God I do not want to do it but I see the Arabs have shot at you from all sides. Through this I would hope to break their assault against you.

Saad, who had been wounded in the attack, says: O Messenger of God, we and these pagan people had believed in gods along with God. We had been idol-worshippers, not truly worshipping God nor knowing Him. At that time the Jews had no hope of eating one date of ours unless they were our guest or we traded them for something from them. And now that God has endowed us with the Quranic message and guided us and strengthened us with you and with it, should we give them our goods? By God we will give them nothing but the sword until He decides between us. The Messenger then says: Let it be as you say.

That night, when the possibility to break the enemies' ranks through a treaty with one of them is overridden, the Muslims receive a convert to the Quranic message during the night. Nuaym, who had been hired by Abu Sufyan to go to Madinah and try to prevent the Muslims from preparing to meet him at the Second Badr, a mission at which he failed subsequently, losing his fee of ten sheep, once again is in the ranks of Abu Sufyan. But something had happened to him during those days in Madinah. There had been a certain spirit among the people which had attracted him to them. Now, watching them stand unified in defense of their city against such overwhelming odds, he is drawn even more to them. He seeks out the Messenger and converts to Islam.

He then presents the Messenger with a plan which he knows he will be able to carry out because none of his people know of his conversion to the Quranic message. He asks permission of the Messenger to lie and the Messenger says: Say whatever you have to in order to draw them away from us because war is deceit.

Nuaym goes to the Bani Qurayzah who welcome him as an old friend.

He tells them that if the Quraysh and Ghatafan fail to defeat the Muslims, they will return to their homes and leave the Jews at the mercy of the Muslims. They should refuse to fight until they are given some of the leading men of the pagans as hostage. This will guarantee the pagans will not leave the area until the Muslims had been defeated. The Qurayzah accept his advice because they themselves had often considered this possibility. They agree not to tell anyone who so counseled them.

Nuaym then goes to Abu Sufyan's friends and says he has some important news to tell them on condition that they not say who gave them the information. They agree and he tells them that the Jews have informed the Messenger that they regret that they had gotten involved in this war. They want to offer Muhammad some of the Quraysh and Ghatafan leaders in return for their own safety. They also agree to join the Muslims. He adds that the Messenger has sent them his agreement. Therefore, if the Qurayzah ask for Quraysh leaders as hostages, the Quraysh and Ghatafan should not accept. He then tells his own tribe and the Ghatafan what he had told the Quraysh.

The next day the pagans send someone to test the Qurayzah tribe. He is told by the Qurayzah leaders that they will not fight because the next day is the Sabbath and after that, they will fight only on condition that they get pagans and Ghatafan leaders as hostages. The pagans and Ghatafan realize Nuaym had been correct. They again send a man to the Qurayzah who says: We will not leave one of our leaders among you. If you are prepared to fight, come and do so.

When the Qurayzah hear this, they look at each other and recall the words of Nuaym. They feel confirmed in their belief that the pagans and the Ghafatan want to trap them into battle. If they win, fine, but if they lose, they will leave this area and return to their homes. They send a message to both groups: we will not fight until we have one of your leaders at our disposal. This breaks the morale of the confederacy. Their unity has been broken by a newly converted Muslim. Following that, the divine help came in the form of a cold wind which blew away their tents and turned over their pots of food.

When the Messenger hears of the confused position of the Quraysh, he commands one of his followers, Hudhayfah, to go to the enemy's camp and find out what is going on. Hudhayfah says: I went to the leaders camp. I saw the tornado had been so strong that there is no food on the fire nor fire nor tents. He hears Abu Sufyan speak to his forces saying: This is not our home. Our animals are dying. The storm has left us no tents. The Qurayzah tribe will not assist us. If it best if we leave this area and return to Makkah. Hudhayfah then goes to the Ghatafan camp and finds it empty.

The Messenger had been praying for three days: *Oh God, Revealer of the Book, Swift Caller to account, turn the confederates to flight, turn them to flight and cause them to quake* (33:9) is revealed when the battle is over. Hudhayfah returns with the news for the Messenger who is offering his formal prayer. He finishes and Hudhayfah tells him of their victory.

## Lesson 102(6). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating or Assessing Solutions

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

## Quranic Chapter 24: The Light (al-Nur) Signs 24:1-24:10

**Madinah:** *Have **you** not considered that glorifies God*
*whatever is in the heavens and the earth*
*and the birds, ones standing in ranks?*
*Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification.*
*And God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* (24:41)
*And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.*
*And to God is the Homecoming.* (24:42)
*Have **you** not considered how God propels clouds*
*and, again, brings what is between them together?*
*Again, He lays them into a heap.*
***You** have seen the rain drops go forth in the midst.*
*And He sends down from the heaven*
*mountains of rain in which there is hail.*
*And He lights it on whom He wills*
*and turns away from it whom He wills.*
*The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight.* (24:43)
*God turns around and around the nighttime and the daytime.*
*Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight.* (24:44)
*God created every moving creature from water. Among them there*
*is what walks on its belly and of them there is what walks on two*

*feet and of them there is what walks on four. God creates what He wills. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (24:45)
*Certainly, We caused manifest signs to descend. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (24:46)
*And they say: We believed in God and the Messenger, and we obeyed. Again, a group of people among them turn away after this. And those are not of the ones who believe.* (24:47)
*And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside.* (24:48)
*But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are yielding.* (24:49)
*Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (24:50)

## COMMENTARY°

### ALL GLORIFY GOD

This is an extraordinary scene of unbelief, error and darkness in human life. Yet it is followed by one of faith, guidance and light in the great universe. This is a scene showing the entire universe with all that lives in it, human and jinn, planets and stars, and all beings, whether animate or inanimate, sharing in God's glorification. We feel how awesome the scene is as we hear the glorification echoed everywhere in the heavens and the earth:

*Have you not considered that glorifies God whatever is in the heavens and the earth and the birds, ones standing in ranks? Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification. And God is Knowing of what they accomplish.* **(24:41)**

The human being does not live alone in this universe. All around him, to his right and to his left, above him and beneath him, and in the expanse beyond, whether reached by his imagination or not, there are beings God has created with different natures, forms and shapes. All share in their belief in God, turn to Him and extol His praises. *And God is Knowing of what they accomplish.*

The Quran directs the human being to look around him: all is of God's making and all living things everywhere in the heavens and the earth are His creatures, glorifying Him and singing His praises. The Quran also directs our full attention to something we see every day without stirring any feeling in us because of its familiarity: it is the scene of birds lifting up their legs and spreading out their wings as they fly. They also glorify God. *Each knew its formal prayer and its glorification.* **(24:41)** Only the human being neglects to glorify

his Lord when he is the one who should be most aware of the importance of believing in God and glorifying Him.

In this scene, the whole universe appears full of humility as it turns to its Creator, singing His praises, addressing its formal prayers to Him. This it does by nature. Its obedience to God is represented in its laws which operate by God's will. When the human being refines his senses, he sees this scene as reality, as though he hears the rhythm of God's glorification echoed throughout the universe. He shares with all creatures their formal prayers and appeals to God. Such was Muhammad, God's Messenger. When he walked, he heard the gravel under his feet singing God's praises. Such was David too for when he chanted his Psalms, the mountains and birds chanted with him.

*And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. And to God is the Homecoming.* **(24:42)** No one should turn anywhere other than to Him, and no refuge is to be sought except with Him. Meeting Him is inevitable. His punishment, if deserved, cannot be averted except through His grace. To Him all shall return.

### SNATCHING EYESIGHT

Next the chapter portrays yet another scene which people pass by paying little attention to it. It is very pleasant to the eye, carrying a message to the heart and inviting the mind to reflect on God's creation as well as the pointers to faith available everywhere in the universe. It provides an area to contemplate the only source of real light, right guidance and true faith.

*Have you not considered how God propels clouds and, again, brings what is between them together? Again, He lays them into a heap. You have seen the rain drops go forth in the midst. And He sends down from the heaven mountains of rain in which there is hail. And He lights it on whom He wills and turns away from it whom He wills. The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight.* **(24:43)**

The scene is portrayed at leisure, slowly, with its component parts being raised up for reflection before they combine panoramically. All this is done deliberately, so that the very sight of these details touches people's hearts and awakens their minds to reflection on God's perfect design.

It is God's design that drives the clouds from one place to another, before allowing these clouds to come together and pile up into a great mass. When this becomes heavy, it bears water that begins to ooze out and then pour down in heavy rain. When piled up, the clouds look like great mountains, producing small pieces of hail. No one sees the clouds look like mountains better than a passenger in a

plane that flies higher than the clouds, or moves through them. The scene at this elevation shows the clouds just like mountains, their huge sizes, steep cliffs, as well as high and low peaks. It is a scene that shows a reality people could not have seen before they were able to fly.

These mountains are subservient to God's orders, functioning in accordance with His law that governs the universe. It is in accordance with this law that God lets rain drop over any community He wants and diverts it from others as He wills. The scene is completed with this final statement: *The gleams of His lightning almost take away the sight.* **(24:43)** It thus provides an element of harmony with the great light that fills the whole universe.

And yet there is another universal scene, showing the night and day: *God turns around and around the nighttime and the daytime. Truly, in this is a lesson for those imbued with insight.* **(24:44)**

When we reflect on the alternation of the night and day, in a perfect system that never fails or slackens, our senses are sharpened and we can better appreciate the perfection of God's work and His law that governs the universe. The Quran alerts our hearts to such scenes which we normally overlook because of their familiarity. Yet they contain a clear message. Therefore, the Quran helps our hearts to always face the universe with sharpened sensitivity and fresh reaction. Many a heart has wondered at the alternation of night and day. Yet it is always the same, losing nothing of its striking beauty. It is only our hearts that have lost their interaction with this great phenomenon. Much indeed do we lose of the beauty of this universe when we look at such phenomena paying little attention to them only because they have become familiar.

The Quran reinvigorates our blunted sensitivity, touches our cold hearts and awakens our tired minds so that we can look at the universe as though we see it for the first time. We thus stop at every phenomenon reflecting on how it works and enquiring about its secrets. We see God's hand doing its work in everything around us, and we reflect on His wisdom and the signs pointing to Him.

Limitless is God in His glory. He wants to give us more of His favors. He wants to gift us the whole universe every time we contemplate one of its phenomena in a way that we appreciate it as though we are seeing it for the first time. Thus, we are alert to the universe and its message a countless number of times. We then enjoy it anew every time we look at it.

This universe is beautiful, awesome and has a nature that is harmonious with our own nature. Both are derived from the same source, subject to the same law. Thus when we relate to the universe

we feel greater reassurance, and we experience the sort of happiness that we feel when we meet someone dear who has been absent for a long time. Besides, in the universe we see God's light, for: *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24:35)** We experience this light in the great expanse of the universe, as well as within ourselves, at the same moment at which we look at the universe with an open heart that wants to understand the secret of God's elaborate planning.

Therefore, the Quran reawakens us time and again, drawing our hearts and souls to a variety of great universal scenes, so that we do not pass by them with closed eyes and sealed hearts. If we do, we end our life journey with very little gain to show for our efforts.

The chapter continues to portray scenes of the universe arousing our interest in them. It shows how all life, with its rich variety, originates from the same source, and has the same nature: *God created every moving creature from water. Among them there is what walks on its belly and of them there is what walks on two feet and of them there is what walks on four.* **(24:45)**

Here the Quran states in a very simple way a great fact that confirms that the origin of all creatures is water. This could mean that water is the basic component of all living species. It could also mean what contemporary scientists have been trying to prove, namely that life started in the sea, making water its first origin. Later, numerous species came into existence.

We, however, do not like to link any fact stated in the Quran with scientific theory, because such theories admit change, modification, or abrogation. Therefore, we take this statement at its face value, confirming its truth which makes clear that God has created all living things from water. This means that having the same origin, they present, as we clearly see with our eyes, a wide and rich variety: crawlers creep on their bellies, while man and birds walk on two legs, but most animals use all four limbs when they walk. All this takes place in accordance with the laws of nature God has set in operation. Nothing occurs by chance or coincidence: *God creates what He wills. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* **(24:45)**

With the great variety that we see in all creatures, an almost endless range of shapes, sizes, colors and characteristics is set before us. Yet they all originate from the same source. This suggests that it is all intended as such, reflecting the elaborate planning in the universe at large. It portrays as false the notion that life started by mere coincidence. What coincidence could give birth to such planning or such great variety? It is all the work of God who, in His wisdom, has given every living soul its shape and form and guided it to what suits it best in this life.

Having thus taken us on a broad round of inspiring universal scenes, the chapter brings us back to its main theme, namely good manners and moral values the Quran aims to establish in the Muslim community. Once more we see that the Quran wants hearts to be purified so as to be bright, reflecting the great light God has placed in the heavens and the earth.

Earlier in the chapter mention was made of people who are not distracted by their business or commercial dealings from their duties of remembering God, attending regularly to prayers and paying their *zakat*. It also highlighted the situation of the ungrateful, their deeds, the layers of darkness in which they live and their eventual destiny.

Now the chapter speaks of the hypocrites who benefit nothing by the clear signs God has placed all around them, or by His revelations that set all things most clearly. These turn their backs on divine guidance. Even though they profess to be believers, their attitude is markedly different from that of believers who obey God's Messenger and are happy with his judgement in their affairs and disputes. In marked contrast to their arrogance, the believers' behavior confirms what they profess. And it is the believers that God has promised to establish in the land where they will be able to practise their faith and conduct their lives in line with His teachings. This is their reward for adopting the right attitude towards God and His Messenger, obeying them in all situations, despite the fact that the unbelievers stand in opposition to them for so doing. The chapter confirms once again that the unbelievers cannot defy God. They will receive their fair punishment in hell, the worst abode for anyone.

### CONTRASTING ATTITUDES

*Certainly, We caused manifest signs to descend. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* **(24:46)** God's revelations provide clarity, allowing God's resplendent light to be seen. They point to the sources of His guidance, making clear what is good and what is evil. They set out the Islamic way of life without ambiguity or equivocation. They define the divine rules which must be implemented in human life on earth. When people implement them in their lives and resort to them for judgement in their disputes, they implement a code that is clearly set out, providing all guarantees that ensure equity and justice for all, and which allow no confusion between true and false or permissible and forbidden.

*And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* **(24:46)** This is indeed the translation adopted by most translators. If we read it in this way then the statement makes clear that God's will is free from all restriction. However, God has established a way to ensure guid-

ance. Any human being who moves towards that way will definitely receive God's light and guidance. By God's will, their path will be made smooth until they reach their destination. Those who turn away from it will lose their guiding light and become hardened in error. Such is God's will with regard to providing guidance to humanity.

The chapter points out that despite the revelations and the signs God had placed in the universe, there is a special type of people who are hypocrites, claiming to be Muslims, but showing no respect for Islamic values:

*And they say: We believed in God and the Messenger, and we obeyed. Again, a group of people among them turn away after this. And those are not of the ones who believe. And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are yielding. Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:47-24:50)**

When faith is genuinely established in a person's heart, it is reflected in that person's behavior. Islam is a proactive faith that cannot remain idle. When it is genuinely accepted as a personal belief, it moves on to show its influence in practice. It must be translated into action. The Islamic method of educating its followers always seeks to transform the mental acceptance of faith into a practical approach that soon becomes a habit or a rule. At the same time, it seeks to provide the mental motivation to make belief and action mutually complementary.

The hypocrites used to claim that they believed in God and His Messenger and that they were keen to obey them, but theirs was a hollow, verbal claim that lacked practical credence. They simply turned away, making their actions belie their claims. "Surely these are not believers," because believers confirm with their actions what they claim to be their faith. Faith is not a toy which a person uses for amusement before discarding it. It is something that settles in a person's heart, reshaping his feelings and influencing his actions. Moreover, when it is firmly established in someone's mind and heart, there is no going back on it.

Those who claimed to be believers did not hesitate to contradict that claim when they were summoned to put their disputes to God's Messenger for judgement on the basis of His law: *And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside. But if they would be in the right, they would approach him as ones who are*

*yielding.* **(24:48-24:49)** They were well aware that a judgement made by God and His Messenger could only seek to establish what is right and ensure justice. It would never be influenced by personal likings. But such hypocrites did not care for justice and right. Hence, they were not prepared to seek the Prophet's judgement. Indeed, they refused to put their disputes to him, except when they were sure that justice was on their side. In such a situation, they did not hesitate to go to him, declaring their prior acceptance of his judgement, because they were certain that it would be in their favor. It would be a judgement on the basis of God's law that gave everyone their due.

Such people provide a typical example of hypocrites at all times: they dare not declare their disbelief; so they pretend to be Muslim. Yet they do not submit to God's law. When they are called upon to put their cases to God and His Messenger for judgement they refuse, seeking any excuse. They are described as unbelievers, because a genuine believer will never reject God's judgement. To accept such judgement is the practical evidence of belief. It is the attitude that confirms strong belief and due respect to God and His Messenger. Only a person whose heart has not been enlightened by faith and who has not adopted Islamic manners rejects God's Messenger's judgement.

Therefore, their attitude is the subject of questions that confirm the fact that their hearts are diseased and wonders at their doubts: *Is there a sickness in their hearts? Or were they in doubt? Or be they fearful that God and His Messenger will be unjust to them? Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

The first question requires no confirmation, for heart disease is sure to bring about such an effect. No one with a sound human nature could deviate so badly from the truth. It is heart disease, a disease that makes someone imbalanced, unable to appreciate true faith and its moral code.

The second question wonders at them doubting God's judgement when they claim to believe in Him. Do they doubt that it comes from God, or that it is the judgement that administers justice? Whatever the case, their attitude differs from that of believers.

The third question combines wonder with denunciation. Do they fear that God and His Messenger might be unfair to them? It is most singular for anyone to entertain such a fear. God is the Creator of all people: it is inconceivable that He would favor some of His creatures at the expense of others. *Nay! Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

God's judgement is the only judgement that is free of all prejudice, because God is fair to all and does not deal unjustly with any-

one. All of His creation are to Him in the same position. Hence, He does not favor any of them at the expense of another. Any judgement other than God's may be susceptible to unfairness. When people legislate, they cannot entirely free themselves of leaning towards what serves their interests. This applies to all human beings; be they individuals, a class or government.

When an individual legislates, he is bound to look for what ensures his own protection and serves his own interests. The same applies when a class, country or a block of countries legislates for another. But when God legislates, no personal security, protection or interest comes into play. His legislation aims to ensure absolute justice which cannot be achieved under any law other than divine law. Hence, those who reject God's judgment, and that of His Messenger, are indeed unjust and wrongdoers. They do not want justice to be administered or right to be supreme. In fact, deep at heart they know that they do not doubt that God's judgement only seeks to ensure justice. The point is that: *Those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(24:50)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** base on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concep** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities

**ASK YOURSELF:**

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

## LESSON 102(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR) SIGNS 24:51-24:57

**Madinah:** *The only saying of the ones who believe had been—*
*when they were called to God and His Messenger*
*that He give judgment between them—to say:*
*We heard and obeyed.*
*And those, they are the ones who prosper.* (24:51)
*And whoever obeys God and His Messenger*
*and dreads God and is God-conscious,*
*those, they are the ones who are victorious.* (24:52)
*And they swore by God their most earnest oaths that if thou*
*wouldst command them, they would go forth.*
*Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better.*
*Truly God is Aware of what you do.* (24:53)
*Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger.*
*But if you turn away,*
*then, on him was only what was loaded on him,*
*and on you was only what was loaded on you.*
*And if you obey him, you will be truly guided.*
*And there is not a duty on the Messenger*
*but the delivering of the clear message.* (24:54)
*God promised those who have believed among you*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*that He will make them successors in the earth,*
*even as He made of those before them successors*
*and He will establish for them their way of life firmly*
*by which He was content with them*
*and He will substitute a place of sanctuary*
*in place of their fear:*
*They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.*
*And whoever was ungrateful after that,*
*then, those, they are the ones who disobey.* (24:55)
*And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms*

*and obey the Messenger*
*so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (24:56 )
*Assume not those who were ungrateful*
*that they are ones who will frustrate Him in the region.*
*Their place of shelter will be the fire*
*and how miserable the Homecoming!* (24:57)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE ROAD TO TRUE SUCCESS

True believers have a different attitude that reflects their complete respect for God's judgement. When they are summoned so that God's Messenger can arbitrate in their disputes, their reaction reflects the profound enlightenment of their hearts: *The only saying of the ones who believe had been—when they were called to God and His Messenger that He give judgment between them—to say: We heard and obeyed. And those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(24:51)**

This is an attitude of complete obedience. There is no hesitation, argument or dispute, because it is an obedience based on complete trust that God's judgement is right and just, and whatever differs with it is based on personal prejudice. Such obedience testifies to complete submission to God, who gives life and conducts it as He wills. It demonstrates full trust that what God chooses for people is infinitely better than what they choose for themselves. God, the Creator, knows His creation better than they know themselves.

*And those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(24:51)** Since God conducts their affairs, organizes their relations and judges between them on the basis of His knowledge and justice, they must be in a far better position than those who rely, in all such matters, on other human beings who are similarly short of knowledge. Besides, the believers are successful because they follow a single straight path that allows no deviation.

They are confident of the soundness of their code of living, follow it without hesitation, which means that their energy, talents and skills work in coherence. They suffer no internal division based on conflicting desires. They follow their own path, charted for them by God.

*And whoever obeys God and His Messenger and dreads God and is God-conscious, those, they are the ones who are victorious.* **(24:52)** The previous sign spoke of obedience and submission when judgment is made. This sign speaks of complete obedience in all matters, implementing every order or prohibition. Such obedience must be coupled with God consciousness and standing in awe of Him. The latter is more pervasive because it entails watching God and feeling

His presence at every turn. This makes a person very uneasy about committing anything that God has forbidden, for they are ashamed and fear His punishment.

*And whoever obeys God and His Messenger and dreads God and is God-conscious, those, they are the ones who are victorious.* **(24:52)** They save themselves in this life and in the life to come. This is what God has promised, and God is always true to His promise. They deserve to triumph, as they have practically taken the necessary measures to ensure such a triumph. Obedience to God and His Messenger requires diligent following of the right way God in His wisdom has defined for humanity. Following this way automatically ensures success in this life and in the life to come. Moreover, standing in awe of God and fearing Him ensure continuity in one's conduct, helping one to ignore all temptations that lure believers away from their straight path.

Obeying God and His Messenger, coupled with fearing God, provide a high standard of propriety that reflects a person's enlightenment and strong bond with God. It also reflects the dignity of believers. Obedience to anyone or any authority means humiliation unless it is based on obeying God and His Messenger. No honorable believer will accept such humiliation, for a true believer will never bow his head before anyone other than God Almighty.

Having so contrasted the attitudes of believers and hypocrites, the chapter now resumes its discussion of the latter's behavior, making it clear that only one sort of attitude can be adopted by believers. It then moves on to outline God's promise to the believers.

*And they swore by God their most earnest oaths that if you would command them, they would go forth.*
*Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better. Truly God is Aware of what you do. Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger. But if you turn away, then, on him was only what was loaded on him, and on you was only what was loaded on you. And if you obey him, you will be truly guided. And there is not a duty on the Messenger but the delivering of the clear message.* **(24:53-24:54)**

The hypocrites used to solemnly swear in front of the Prophet that he needed only to give them his orders and they would readily join him on any expedition against his enemies. They would not hesitate to fight for Islam under his banner. But God was fully aware that they were lying. Hence, He decries their assertions and looks at their oaths with sarcasm: *Say: Swear not; honorable obedience is better.* **(24:53)** This means that there is no need for their oaths, because their obedience is too well known to need any assertion or oath. It is as if we say to a person whom we know to be a habitual liar that

he need not assert to us that he is saying the truth, because we know him to be always truthful.

This sarcastic reply is followed by the assertion: *Truly God is Aware of what you do.* **(24:53)** He is certainly in no need of their oaths. He knows that they would not obey any order to go to war, and that they would not join the Prophet when he went on such an expedition. Therefore, a fresh order is given to them to show true obedience to God and His Messenger, not the sort they are known to show, because that is false. *Say: Obey God and obey the Messenger.* **(24:54)**

*But if you turn away, then, on him was only what was loaded on him, and on you was only what was loaded on you.* **(24:54)** His only task for which he is answerable is to deliver God's message, as he has surely done: *And on you was only what was loaded on you.* **(24:54)** Your task is to obey him most sincerely. But so far, you have not done so. However: *if you obey him, you will be truly guided.* **(24:54)** You will be following the right path that leads you to success in both this life and the life to come. *And there is not a duty on the Messenger but the delivering of the clear message.* **(24:54)** He is not responsible for your acceptance or rejection of the faith. If you turn away, he will not be deemed to have fallen short of fulfilling his task. You are the ones who will have to account for that, and you are the ones who run the risk of being punished for your disobedience of the orders given to you by God and His Messenger.

### GOD'S TRUE PROMISE

Once the attitude of the hypocrites has been discussed and settled, the chapter leaves them aside and speaks about obedient believers. It outlines the reward of sincere obedience and proactive faith. The first instalment of such reward is given in this life, before human beings are held to account on the Day of Resurrection.

*God promised those who have believed among you and did as the ones in accord with morality, that He will make them successors in the earth, even as He made of those before them successors and He will establish for them their way of life firmly by which He was content with them and He will substitute a place of sanctuary in place of their fear: They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me. And whoever was ungrateful after that, then, those, they are the ones who disobey.* **(24:55)**

Such is God's promise to the believers who do good deeds and follow the Prophet Muhammad's guidance. They will be given power and will be established on earth. Their state of fear will be replaced by a state of reassurance and security. God's promise will always

come true. It is, then, pertinent to ask about the nature of faith and the practical fulfilment of this promise by God.

True faith, which ensures that God's promise comes true, is great indeed. It influences all human activity and defines its direction. Once faith is well established in a person's heart, it begins to manifest itself in the form of positive and constructive action undertaken for God's sake and addressed to Him. It means full compliance with His orders in all matters, major and minor. It transforms a believer's desires and inclinations so as to make them all in line with the Prophet's guidance, because such guidance has been given to him by God.

It is the sort of faith that fills people's whole entity, their feelings, aspirations, natural inclinations, actions, movements, as well as their behavior at home, in society and with their Lord. All these must be addressed or dedicated to God alone. This is specifically mentioned in the chapter as justification for giving believers power and establishing them on earth: *They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* **(24:55)** Idolatry can take different shapes and forms, and can creep into a person's mind through a variety of ways and means. The chapter makes it clear however that to address any action or feeling to anyone other than God is a manifestation of idolatry.

Belief in God is a complete way of life. It incorporates all divine orders including the provision of all means, taking all precautions and ensuring all that is necessary to fulfil the great trust of being in charge of the earth and building human life on it. So what does this involve in reality?

It does not just entail being in power and forming a government. Rather it involves all this with the proviso that it is used for promoting sound human life and the implementation of the way of life God has chosen for humanity. It is only through such implementation that humanity can achieve the level of perfection that befits the species God has honored.

The trust given to man on earth is an ability to build and promote goodness, not to corrupt and destroy. It involves ensuring justice and happiness for all, not injustice or suppression. It leads to the elevation of humanity and human life, and not letting them sink to the level of animals.

It is such power and such trust that God has promised the believers who do good deeds. He promised to give them power on earth, just as He gave it to earlier communities of believers, so that they would put into practice the constitution He chose for humanity, establish justice and enable humanity to attain sublimity. People who spread corruption and injustice, and promote carnal desires are not

in the position of trustees. They are subjected to a test or are the means to test others. All this is done to fulfil God's purpose.

To further demonstrate this aspect of giving power to the believers is the fact that this promise is followed in the same sign by a further one: *He will establish for them their way of life firmly by which He was content with them.* **(24:55)** The firm establishment of His religion means that this will take a firm hold on people's hearts on the one hand, and form the basis on which all life affairs are conducted on the other. God has promised the believers who do righteous deeds to grant them power on earth and to make their faith govern human life. Their faith bids them to do well, establish justice, shun worldly desires, and build a happy human life making good use of all the resources God has placed on earth. It also bids the believers to dedicate all this to God alone.

Furthermore, God's promise to the believers stipulates *He will substitute a place of sanctuary in place of their fear.* The Prophet's Companions were for a long period of time in a state of fear. They could not put down their arms, even after the Prophet and his Companions had migrated to Madinah, the city that served as the first base for Islam in history.

### NOT INCLUDED IN GOD'S PROMISE

*And whoever was ungrateful after that, then, those, they are the ones who disobey.* **(24:55)** They are the ones who do not meet God's conditions, and, therefore, God's promise does not apply to them.

God's promise was fulfilled once, and remained effective for as long as the Muslims continued to meet His conditions: *They shall worship Me—ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* **(24:55)** This includes any partners, whether in the form of deities to which worship is addressed or desires and ambitions. They must believe and do righteous deeds. God's promise applies to anyone who meets these conditions, and it remains in force till the end of human life. However, victory, power and security may be slow in coming, but this will only be the result of a failure by the believers to meet some aspects of the conditions outlined, or their failure to attend to a particular duty involved. But when the Muslim community has benefited by the trials they have to endure and passed the test God sets for them; when they have endured fear and sought security; when they yearn for dignity after having suffered humiliation; when they aspire to having power after being weak; God's promise will be fulfilled to them in spite of any opposing power. One proviso applies, however: in their perseverance through tests and trials, and in their aspiration to the fulfilment of God's promise, the believers must always resort

to the means God has outlined and fulfil the conditions He has made clear.

Therefore, the promise is followed with an order to attend to Islamic duties, such as prayer, *zakat* and obeying the Prophet. Moreover, the Prophet and his followers must never give any weight to the power of unbelievers who fight them on account of their faith.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

### HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

## LESSON 102(8). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

**We are not judged arbitrarily**: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

**This moral order** works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

**God has entered into covenant** with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

**Reason**: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

**Good deeds**: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
## SIGNS 24:58-24:61

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Let them ask permission*
*—those whom your right hands possessed (f)*
*and those who reach not puberty—three times:*
*Before the dawn formal prayer,*
*when you lay down your garments at the time of noon*
*and after the time of night formal prayer.*
*These are the three times of privacy for you.*
*There is not on you nor on them blame after these.*
*Other than these, go about some of you with some others.*
*Thus, God makes manifest to you the signs.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (24:58)
*When infant children were fully grown among you,*
*then, let them ask permission as asked permission*
*those who were before them.*
*Thus, God makes manifest for you His signs.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (24:59)
*And women who are past child-bearing,*
*those who hope not for marriage,*
*there is no blame on them (f)*
*if they lay down their (f) garments,*
*not as ones who flaunt themselves and their (f) adornment.*
*And that they have restraint is better for them (f),*
*and God is Hearing, Knowing.* (24:60)
*There is no fault on the blind nor fault on the lame*
*nor fault on the sick nor on yourselves*
*that you eat from your houses or the houses of your fathers*
*or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers*
*or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your paternal uncles*
*or the houses of your paternal aunts*
*or the houses of your maternal uncles*
*or the houses of your maternal aunts*
*or of that for which you possess its keys*
*or your ardent friend.*
*There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately.*
*But when you entered houses, then, greet one another*
*with a greeting from God,*
*one that is blessed and what is good.*
*Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs*
*so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (24:61)

## COMMENTARY°

*And perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy. Assume not those who were ungrateful that they are ones who will frustrate Him in the region. Their place of shelter will be the fire and how miserable the Homecoming!* **(24:56-24:57)**

Believers must maintain their bond with God, keep their minds and hearts on the right path through prayer, resist stinginess, purify themselves as individuals and as a community through the payment of zakat, obey the Prophet and accept his judgement, implement God's law in all matters, great or small, so as to set human life on the path He has chosen. Believers must do all this: *so that perhaps you will find mercy.* **(24:56)** In this life, God's mercy removes corruption, fear, worry and error, and in the hereafter, it removes His punishment.

Addressing them directly, God says to the believers: if you remain steadfast following My path, then you need not worry about the might of the unbelievers. They cannot frustrate God's purpose on earth. The power they apparently wield will not stand in your way. You are far stronger when equipped with your faith, implement your system and raise whatever power you can muster. In material power, you may not be a match for them, but believers who strive for the truth can work miracles.

Islam is a great truth which must be carefully examined by anyone who wishes to see the fulfilment of God's promise outlined in the above verses. Such a person must also look at how it came true in human history, understand the true meaning of its conditions before entertaining any doubt about it or worry about the slowness of its fulfilment.

Never did the Muslim community follow God's way, implementing the constitution He has laid down, allowing it to operate in all spheres of life, without reaping the reward of God's promise to grant it power and security. Whenever it abandoned this course, it went to the end of the line, suffered humiliation, lived in fear and misery and saw its faith retreat from guiding human life.

Nevertheless, God's promise remains in force, and His conditions are well defined. Whoever wants to see the promise fulfilled, must do their task and fulfil its conditions. No one is ever more true to his promises than God.

## OVERVIEW

The Quranic message gives a complete way of life, setting a code that organizes human life in all situations. It lays down values

that govern all human relations and social actions. The Quranic message establishes values that are relevant to points of detail in daily situations and behavior, in the same way as it lays down values and principles that govern serious and momentous matters. It ensures harmony between the two and makes acceptance by God and earning His pleasure the goal of all human activities.

The present chapter provides an example of such harmony. It specifies certain mandatory punishments for serious offenses, and it speaks of seeking permission before entering others' homes. Alongside the two it portrays spectacular scenes from the universe. The chapter then speaks of the Muslims' proper attitude as they submit to the rule of God and His Messenger, contrasting this with the hypocrites' insolence. Alongside this comes God's true promise to the believers that they will be established on earth and live in peace and security. In this last passage, the chapter again speaks of proper manners within the home, and when inmates need to seek permission before entering rooms, so as not to intrude on others' privacy. It also makes clear the requirement of seeking permission before leaving the Prophet. It also outlines the proper manner of visiting relatives and friends where one may partake of food. Alongside this, it outlines the proper way of addressing the Prophet. All these form part of the Islamic manners that every Muslim community should adopt, realizing that the Quran provides guidance in all life situations, even though they may not be of a serious nature.

### GOOD MANNERS AT HOME

*O those who believed! Let them ask permission—those whom your right hands possessed (f) and those who reach not puberty—three times: Before the dawn formal prayer, when you lay down your garments at the time of noon and after the time of night formal prayer. These are the three times of privacy for you. There is not on you nor on them blame after these. Other than these, go about some of you with some others. Thus, God makes manifest to you the signs. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(24:58)**

Earlier in the chapter the proper manner of seeking permission before entering a house is outlined. Now the chapter speaks of the need to seek permission within the home. Servants, who were slaves, and children who are not so young but have not yet attained puberty enter rooms without knocking to seek permission, except during three times of the day. These are periods of relaxation when adults may be undressed. These three occasions are: 1) shortly before the daybreak prayer, i.e. *fajr*, when people normally still wear their night garments, or they may be putting on their day clothes in readiness to

go out; 2) about midday when people take a nap after changing into more comfortable garments for relaxation; and 3) after they have offered their nightfall prayer, i.e. Ayisha. At this time, people put on their night clothes for more comfort.

During these three periods, servants and children below the age of puberty must knock before entering rooms in the house so that they do not see their relatives undressed. Many people do not observe such manners at home, thinking little of the psychological and moral effects of their laxity. Or they may think that servants do not stare at their masters' nakedness, or that children below the age of puberty do not take notice. With the progress achieved today in the field of human psychology, experts emphasize that people are often influenced for life by what they see or experience in childhood, and that such experience may cause them psychological problems that are not easy to cure. God, who knows everything, including the finest and most subtle feelings, outlines these manners which He wants the Muslim community to observe, so that it remains a community with sound hearts and minds, free from psychological problems.

These three occasions are specified because it is more likely that people will be undressed. Children and servants are not required to knock before entry all the time, because this would be difficult to observe, considering that these two groups frequently enter their elders' rooms: either because servants are going about their tasks or because children cannot stay away from their parents for long. Hence the description: "Beyond these occasions, neither you nor they will incur any sin if they move freely about you, attending to one another." We see how the divine instruction strikes a balance between the need to ensure that people do not show their nakedness in front of others, even though they may be young or servants, and the practical need for easy access. Hence, the instruction does not order seeking permission to enter on all occasions.

When children attain to puberty, the same rules of entry apply to them as to those who are not related to the family. This means that they must seek permission before entering a room at any time, in accordance with the general rules outlined earlier in the chapter: *When infant children were fully grown among you, then, let them ask permission as asked permission those who were before them. Thus, God makes manifest for you His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(24:59)**

We note that the final comment in these verses stresses God's knowledge and wisdom, because the instructions given are based on His knowledge of our inner feelings and the manners that are most likely to refine such feelings. In His wisdom, God lays down the teachings that set minds and hearts on the right course.

## RULES RELAXED

Earlier in the chapter orders were given requiring women to cover their charms and adornments so that there is little room for temptation or exciting desire. An exception is made here in the case of older women who no longer have the desire to consort with men, and who no longer excite men's desires:

*And women who are past child-bearing, those who hope not for marriage, there is no blame on them (f) if they lay down their (f) garments, not as ones who flaunt themselves and their (f) adornment. And that they have restraint is better for them (f), and God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(24:60)**

Such elder women may, if they choose, put aside their cloaks and outer garments, provided that this does not expose their nakedness, and that they do not make a show, displaying their charms or adornments. It is better for them that they should not do so, continuing to wear their outer, loose garments. In describing such modesty the chapter uses the word *yasta'fitna*, which is derived from the Arabic root *'iffah*, meaning chastity. Thus, this attitude is described as aiming to maintain chastity because of the close link between chastity and covering women's charms, while exposing such charms is closely linked to temptation. This instruction is in line with the general Islamic view that the best method of guarding people's chastity is to reduce the chances for temptation.

God hears all and knows all. He is aware of all things, including what is uttered and what is entertained in one's thoughts. The question here is one of intention and conscience. The chapter then tackles another aspect of relations with friends and relatives:

*There is no fault on the blind nor fault on the lame nor fault on the sick nor on yourselves that you eat from your houses or the houses of your fathers or the houses of your mothers or the houses of your brothers or the houses of your sisters or the houses of your paternal uncles or the houses of your paternal aunts or the houses of your maternal uncles or the houses of your maternal aunts or of that for which you possess its keys or your ardent friend. There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately. But when you entered houses, then, greet one another with a greeting from God, one that is blessed and what is good. Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* **(24:61)**

Reports suggest that in the early days of Islam, Muslims used to eat in such houses mentioned in this sign without asking the owners' permission. They also took with them poor people who were blind, lame or ill. Then when a sign was revealed stating: *And consume not your wealth among yourselves in falsehood,* **(2:188)** they felt very

uneasy about eating in relatives' homes. Furthermore, such poor people as were blind, lame or ill felt uneasy about joining them, unless they were specifically invited by the owner. This reflects the keen sensitivity of the early Muslims, and their desire to avoid anything that was even remotely connected with what God prohibited. Hence, this present sign was revealed, making it perfectly permissible for relatives to eat in the homes of such relatives mentioned in the verse, and to bring with them such needy people as the sign describes.

Since this sign lays down certain legislation we note how it is phrased, choosing its wording very carefully so as not to leave any room for doubt or confusion. We also note how relatives are mentioned in a specific order. It starts with a reference to the homes of one's own children and spouses without even mentioning these relatives. The sign includes these in the general reference to "your houses", because the house of one's son, daughter, wife or husband is like one's own. Then other homes are mentioned, starting with those belonging to a father, mother, paternal uncle and aunt, maternal uncle and aunt. Added to these is a person who is entrusted with looking after one's property, having the keys to it. Such a person may eat from that house in accordance with what is reasonable, not taking more than what he needs for his own food. Also added are friends' homes so as to make the relation with them similar to that with one's own relatives. Indeed, friends may be very happy for friends to eat at their homes without the need for any permission. But all this is conditional on causing no harm to the home owner.

Having mentioned the homes in which one may eat without seeking prior permission, the sign continues to explain the manner in which such eating may take place: "You will incur no sin by eating in company or separately." In pre-Islamic days some Arabs disliked eating alone. If such a person did not find someone to eat with, he would not touch the food. God lifted this restriction, because it causes unnatural complications. He left the matter simple to cater for all situations. Hence people may eat alone or in company.

The sign adds an instruction on manners to be observed when entering such homes where people are allowed to eat: *There is no blame on you that you eat altogether or separately. But when you entered houses, then, greet one another with a greeting from God, one that is blessed and what is good.* **(24:61)** The phraseology of this instruction in the Arabic original employs a fine touch as it says: 'greet yourselves' to express the meaning given in translation as 'greet one another'. This is an indication of the strength of the relationship between those mentioned in this verse. A person who greets his relative or friend is actually greeting himself, and the greeting of-

fered is enjoined by God, as though coming from Him. It is thus blessed, full of goodness. As such it establishes a bond between them that is never severed.

These instructions emphasize that the believers feel their bond with God in all matters and appreciate the wisdom behind divine legislation: *Thus, God makes manifest for you the signs so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* **(24:61)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others

## LESSON 102(9). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 24: THE LIGHT (AL-NUR)
## SIGNS 24:62-24:64

**Madinah:** *The ones who believe*
*are only those who believe in God and His Messenger.*
*And when they had been with him on a collective matter,*

*they go not until they asked his permission.*
*Truly, those who ask thy permission,*
*those are those who believed in God and His Messenger.*
*So when they ask thy permission for some of their affairs,*
*give permission to whom you had willed of them,*
*and ask God for forgiveness for them.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:62 )
*The supplication of the Messenger among you*
*is not as the supplication of some of you on some other.*
*Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover.*
*And let those who go against his command*
*beware so that a test should not light on them*
*or a painful punishment not light on them.* (24:63 )
*Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth.*
*Surely, He knows what you did.*
*And on the Day when they are returned to Him,*
*then, He will tell them what their hands did,*
*and God is Knowing of everything.* (24:64)

## COMMENTARY°

### GOOD MANNERS WITH THE PROPHET

The chapter then moves on to organizing relations within the larger family of the Muslim community and its leader, the Prophet and how Muslims should behave in his presence:

*The ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask your permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask your permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom you had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other. Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them. Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, He knows what you did. And on the Day when they are returned to Him, then, He will tell them what their hands did, and God is Knowing of everything.* **(24:62-24:64)**

Ibn Ishaq mentions the occasion when these verses were revealed. He says that when the Quraysh and the confederate tribes marched towards Madinah, pledging to annihilate the Muslims, the Prophet ordered the digging of a moat around the entrance to Madi-

nah. He himself took part in the digging work so as to encourage those who were also taking part. All Muslims were working hard, except. for a number of hypocrites. They tried to hide their lack of commitment by doing a little work before sneaking away, without the Prophet's knowledge or permission. On the other hand, the true Muslims continued to work hard. If any of them needed to leave for some important business, he mentioned this to the Prophet, requesting permission before so leaving. The Prophet granted him permission, and he returned as soon as he had attended to the business in hand. They all felt that taking part in this work would earn them reward from God. God described those true believers in the sign: *those are those who believed in God and His Messenger.* In reference to the hypocrites who sneaked away without permission, God says: *So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them.*

Whatever was the background behind the revelation of these verses, they include important rules for the Muslim community which should be observed between the leader and the members of that community. These rules should be so ingrained as to become part of the traditions, feelings and regulations within the community. Otherwise, the community will fall into total chaos. Thus, *he ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask **your** permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:62)** This applies to serious matters that require collective action, such as a decision on going to war, or a matter that concerns the whole community. When such a grave matter is being considered or acted upon, believers do not absent themselves without first obtaining their leader's permission. Thus, no room is left for disorder.

People with faith do not seek permission to leave unless they are in real need to do so. Their faith and discipline ensure that they are not away when a serious collective matter is at hand. The Quran, however, gives the Prophet, who is the leader of the Muslim community, the right to grant or withhold such permission. **(24:62)** This means that there is no harm in withholding permission, should the situation require this. The leader of the Muslim community thus exercises his authority in determining whether or not to allow an individual to leave, depending on how he sees the interests of the

community being best served.

Nevertheless, the chapter makes clear that it is better for the individual to try to overcome personal needs, so as to stay with the Prophet. Receiving permission to depart for a while means falling short on fulfilling one's duty. Hence, it needs for the Prophet to pray to God to forgive those who needed to be absent for a time: "*So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them , and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(24:62)** This puts a check on the believer through his own conscience, ensuring that he does not seek a leave of absence in such situations unless he has very compelling reasons.

### A STERN WARNING TO THE DISOBEDIENT

The chapter then alerts the Muslims to the need to address the Prophet with respect when they seek his permission, and indeed in all situations. They should not call him by his name or nickname, as they call each other. He is to be addressed as the man God has honored by making him His Messenger: *The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other.* **(24:63)** Indeed people must be full of respect for him as God's Messenger, so that they pay due heed to every word he says and every directive he gives. Teachers and leaders should be held in high esteem and addressed with respect. The fact that the Prophet was very modest in his approach, and easy to deal with, did not mean that it was appropriate for his Companions to forget that he was their leader who educated them and refined their manners, addressing him as they would address one another. Deep in their hearts, those who are being educated should hold their educator in high regard so that they are ashamed if they happen to overstep the requirements of respect when dealing with him.

The hypocrites who sneaked away, covering for one another, are given a stern warning. If the Prophet could not see them, God was certainly watching them: *Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover.* **(24:63)** The Arabic wording practically shows their stealthy movements, as they left stealthily, like despicable cowards.

*Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them.* **(24:63)** The warning here is very stern. Those who disobey the Prophet's orders, seeking a way different from his, sneaking away in pursuit of personal gain or to avoid potential risk, should beware. They may find themselves in the midst of a situation where values and standards are

blurred, where the true and false are not easily distinguished and the community finds itself in disarray. In such a situation no one is sure of his own safety, as people do not abide by the law and good may not be easily distinguished from evil. Such a situation is miserable for everyone: *so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them.* Such grievous suffering could befall people in this life or in the life to come, in retribution for disobeying God's orders and rejecting the way of life He has laid down.

The chapter concludes with a sign that balances the warning with a statement making it clear to both believers and unbelievers that God sees them all, and knows their actions and the intentions behind each action: *Surely, to God belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Surely, He knows what you did. And on the Day when they are returned to Him, then, He will tell them what their hands did, and God is Knowing of everything.* **(24:64)**

Thus, the conclusion aims to remind people to remain God-fearing. Being so provides the ultimate guarantee for the fulfilment of His orders, abiding by the rules He has set, observing the manners He has outlined. We have seen many of these clearly stated in this chapter, relating to different aspects of life, but all treated on an equal footing.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the

text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

# APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 19*

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 19 of the Revelation (6 AH/627-628 CE)

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# Year 19 of the Revelation
## Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 6 AH
## ca. May 23, 627-May 10, 628

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 19*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 6 AH/ca. May 23, 627 CE-May 10, 628 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

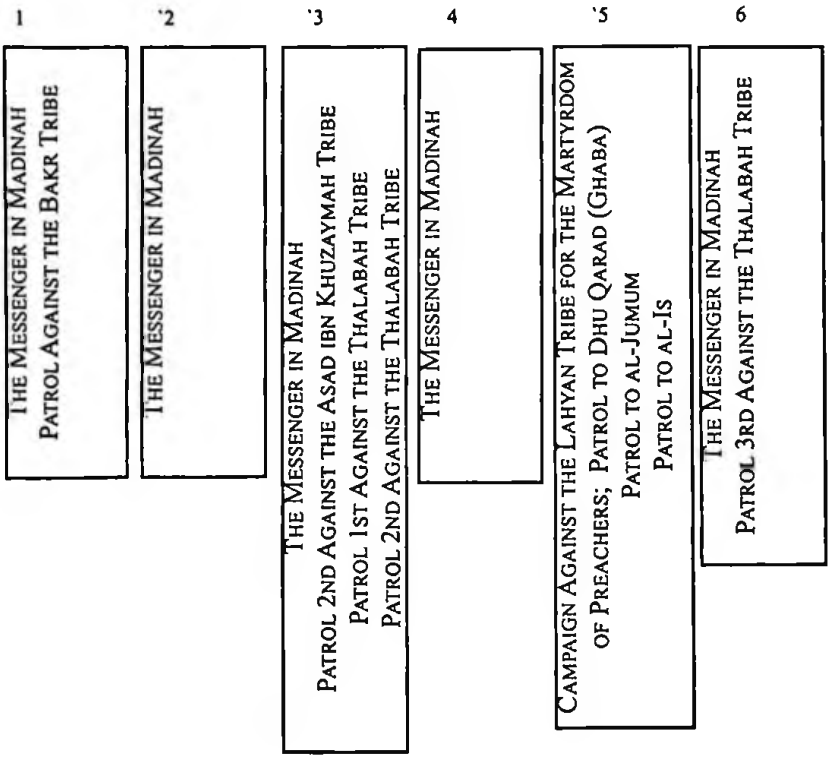
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 19*

## TIMELINE

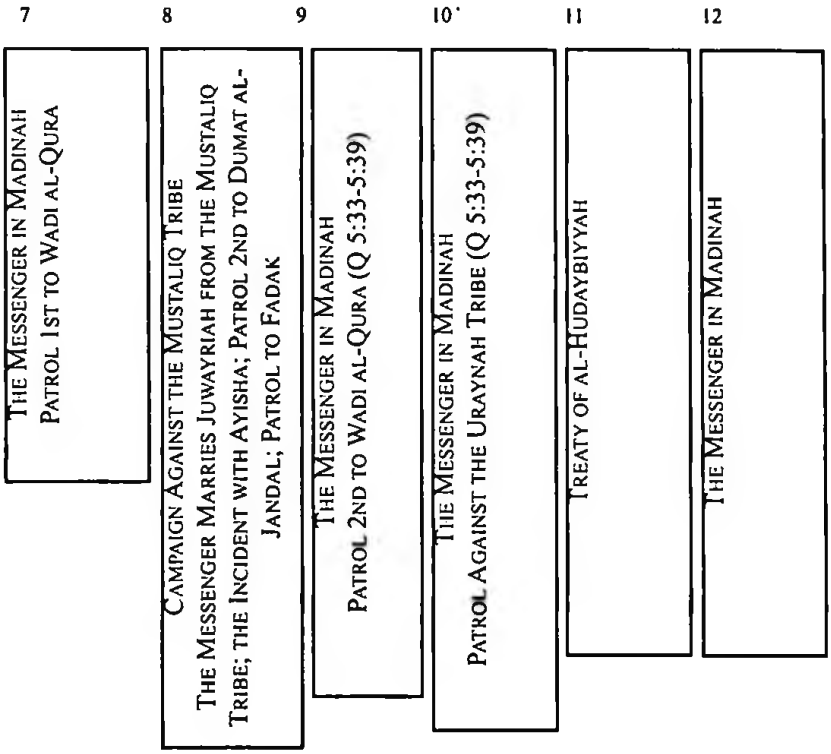



**Key**
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 19*

## TIMELINE




**Key**
7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = THE MESSENGER PARTICIPATES
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 19* presented here begins with Lesson 103 and Quranic Chapter 22, the 103rd chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 63, 58 and finally Lesson 106 and Quranic Chapter 49, the 106th chapter revealed.

## LESSON 103(1). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)
## SIGNS 22:1-22:10

**Madinah:** *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord.*
*Truly, the earthquake of the Hour is a tremendous thing.*
*On a Day you will see it,* (22:1)
*everyone who is breast feeding will be negligent*
*of whoever she breast fed.*
*And every pregnant woman will bring forth a foetus*
*and* ***you*** *will see humanity intoxicated*
*yet they will not be intoxicated.*
*But the punishment of God will be severe.* (22:2)
*And among humanity is he who disputes about God*
*without knowledge and follows every rebel satan.* (22:3)
*It was written down about him that whoever turned away to him*
*as a friend, truly, he will cause him to go astray*
*and will guide him to the punishment of the blaze.* (22:4)
*O humanity! If you had been in doubt about the Upraising,*
*truly, We created you from earth dust*
*and, again, from seminal fluid and, again, from a clot*
*and, again, from tissue that was formed*
*and that was not formed so that we make it manifest to you.*
*We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is*
*determined. And, again, We bring you out as infant children and,*
*again, you may reach the coming of age.*

*And among you there is he whom death will call to itself.*
*And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched*
*lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge.*
*And **you** have seen the earth as that which is lifeless.*
*Yet when We caused water to descend on it, it quivered*
*and it swelled and put forth every lovely pair.* (22:5)
*That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life*
*to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* (22:6)
*And, truly, the Hour is that which arrives.*
*There is no doubt about it*
*and that God will raise up whoever is in the graves.* (22:7)
*And among humanity is such a one who disputes about God*
*without knowledge nor guidance nor an illuminating Book,* (22:8)
*turning to his side as one who turns away to cause to go astray*
*from the way of God. For him in the present is degradation.*
*And We will cause him to experience*
*—on the Day of Resurrection—*
*the punishment of the burning.* (22:9)
*That is because of what thy two hands put forward!*
*And, truly, God is not unjust to His servants.* (22:10)

## COMMENTARY°

### A STARTING JOLT

The impressions the chapter generates in its various scenes and cited examples are those of power, strength, toughness and awe. It delivers clear warnings and alerts our sense of God-consciousness, of fearing Him and submitting to His will. The scene of resurrection at the outset is one of power, striking fear in people's hearts: **(22:1-22:2)**

The same may be said of the scene describing punishment in the hereafter: *These two disputants strove against one another about their Lord. Then, for those who were ungrateful garments of fire will be cut out for them. Over their heads, scalding water will be unloosed whereby what is in their bellies will be dissolved and their skins. And for them are maces of iron. Whenever they wanted to go forth from there because of lament, they will be caused to return to it and experience the punishment of the burning.* **(22:19-22:22)**

A very vivid image is drawn showing the status of one who associates partners with God: *Turn to God as monotheists not with Him as ones who are polytheists. And whoever ascribes partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven and the birds snatch him or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away.* **(22:31)** Equally vivid is the description of the one who has lost hope of ever being

granted God's support: *Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him, in the present and in the world to come, let him stretch out a cord to heaven. Again, let him sever it. Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes to put away what enrages him.* **(22:15)**

The scene depicting the townships destroyed on account of their wrongdoing also emits power: *And how many a town We caused to perish while they are ones who are unjust so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins and how much well water ignored and a tall palace!* **(22:45)**

Such images of power and awe are coupled with serious orders and assigned tasks in addition to the justification given for the use of power to repel aggression and the firm promise to grant victory and power. This is re-emphasized in reference to God's might and the weakness of His alleged partners. Belonging to the first group is the following example: *Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged. And, truly, Powerful is God to help them, those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God driving back humanity, some by some other, cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues and mosques in which is remembered in it the Name of God frequently. Truly, God will help whoever helps Him. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty. Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth, they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms and they commanded to that which is honorable and they prohibited that which is unlawful. And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* **(22:39-22:41)**

An example of the second type is: *O humanity! A parable was propounded, so listen to it. Truly, those whom you call to other than God will never create a fly, even if they were gathered together for it. And when the fly is to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly. Weak were the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought. They duly measured not the measure of God. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(22:73-22:74)**

Beyond all this we discern the repeated call to remain God-conscious and to stand in awe of God. The chapter starts with this call in its first sign, and repeats it time and again: *O humanity! Be God-conscious of your Lord. Truly, the earthquake of the Hour is a tremendous thing.* **(22:1)** *That was commanded! Whoever holds the waymarks of God in honor, then, it is, truly, from hearts filled with God-consciousness.* **(22:32)** *And for every community We assigned devotional acts that they may remember the Name of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals. And your God is One God.*

*Submit to Him, and give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves, those who, when God was remembered, their hearts took notice and the ones who remain steadfast against whatever lit on them and the ones who perform the formal prayer and who spends out of what We provided them.* (22:34-35) *Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God, rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him. Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you that you magnify God in that He guided you. And give you good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* (22:37)

The chapter is also replete with scenes of the universe, the Day of Judgment, the fate of earlier communities, cited cases, images, reflections and lessons drawn. All aim to alert our feelings of faith, piety, and surrender to God. This is what characterizes the entire chapter and gives it its distinctive mark. When we read the chapter in full, we find that it consists of four main parts. It begins with a general address to all humanity, calling on them to be God-conscious. They are warned against the violent convulsion which announces the arrival of the Day of Judgment. We also have a description of the horrific scenes accompanying it and a denunciation of disputing without knowledge about God and following every devil who inevitably leads his followers astray. It then highlights indications of the resurrection based on the stages of life a human embryo goes through, and the development of plant life, making a clear link between all types of life. These stages which follow well established and never failing laws God has set in operation are shown to be closely linked to a number of truisms: namely, that God is the truth; that He brings the dead to life; that He has power over all things; that the Last Hour will inevitably come, and that God will resurrect all those buried in their graves. All these are natural laws and facts closely related to the law that governs the life of the universe.

A second denunciation of ignorant disputes about God follows, since such disputes are devoid of guidance and follow no enlightening book or revelation. As this is made clear, a negative example is given showing the repugnant attitude of those who look at faith from a profit and loss point of view. When misfortune befalls such people, they are quick to seek help from sources other than God, in effect despairing of His help. This part of the chapter concludes with a definitive statement that guidance and error are achieved by God's will. He will certainly judge, on the Day of Reckoning, between the followers of different faiths. It finally paints a horrific scene of the punishment suffered by the ungrateful, contrasted with the perfect bliss enjoyed by believers.

The second part is clearly related to the first as it opens with a

comment on the ungrateful who turn people away from God's path and from the Sacred Mosque in Makkah. Their action is strongly denounced since God has made the Sacred Mosque a place for all humanity, where those who live close by it and those who come from remote parts have the same rights and position. It then relates part of the history of building the Kabah, often referred to in the Quran as the House, and the task assigned by God to Abraham to build it on the basis of His Oneness, purifying it of all traces of idolatry. It goes on to mention some of the rituals of pilgrimage and how they strengthen people's piety, which is the aim of this great act of worship. This part of the chapter concludes with giving permission to believers to fight in order to protect places and rites of worship against any aggression that seeks to turn them away from their belief in God alone

The third part provides examples of past communities' denials of faith, the destruction of hardened ungrateful, and images of cities destroyed over the heads of wrongdoers. The purpose here is to explain God's law with regard to the messages He sends to humanity, to comfort the Prophet who was facing a determined campaign of rejection and opposition, and to reassure the believers as to their inevitable destiny. This part also includes certain aspects of Satan's scheming against Prophets and Messengers, and how God reasserts His message, setting His revelations on a solid basis. Thus, believers are reassured and the ungrateful, whether weaklings or the arrogant and powerful, turn away, having been misled by Satan. The final part of the chapter states God's promise of support to anyone who is oppressed as he tries to repel such aggression. This promise is followed by highlighting some aspects of God's infinite power. Next to it we have a miserable image of the helplessness of the deities worshipped by those who associate partners with God. The chapter concludes with an address to the believers to worship their Lord and strive for His cause, and to hold fast to His rope as they fulfil the duties required by their faith which goes back to the time of Abraham.

### A Fear-Striking Opening

These signs **(22:1-22:2)** are how the chapter begins: an awesome opening that makes hearts tremble. It addresses all humanity, calling on them to fear their Lord and warning them against what may happen on the eventful and terrible Day of Judgment. There is a clear element of mystery about it, one that is frightening and cannot be expressed in words. Thus we are told of a 'violent convulsion' which is then described as 'awesome indeed', but we have no clear indication as to its nature or substance. When the details are given, we find

them even more frightening. We have a picture of every suckling mother completely unaware of the child she is nursing: she looks but does not see, moves but only aimlessly. Every pregnant female miscarries because of the great shock that engulfs her. All people look drunk, but they are not. They only seem to be as they look into a void and walk unsteadily in all directions. It is a very busy scene, with a huge moving crowd. We almost see it with our eyes as the signs are recited, and we paint it in our imagination. Yet we hardly get the full view, because of the horror it describes. It is a horror that cannot be measured by volume or extent, but rather by its effect on human beings. Its measure is the suckling mother oblivious of the child on her breast. No mother can be so oblivious unless the horror she is encountering commands all her senses and faculties. It is also measured by the miscarrying pregnant women, and by the people behaving as if they are drunk yet who have not had a drink. All this is because God's punishment is severe indeed.

### THE WAY LEADING TO ERROR

Despite this horror, we are told that some people dispute about God, having no fear of Him: **(22:3-22:4)** Whether the dispute is about God's existence, Oneness, power, knowledge or any of His attributes, it sounds extremely singular. How can anyone realize the extent of the horror that awaits us all, and from which the only escape is through piety and earning God's pleasure, yet continue to dispute about God? How can anyone with a mind to think and a heart to feel indulge in anything other than trying to avoid this violent convulsion whose horror threatens us all?

Had it been a dispute based on true knowledge, something might be said for it, but it is a dispute without knowledge. It is immersed in arrogance that seeks no firm evidence, and error that is the result of following Satan's bidding. Such people dispute about God *and follows every rebel satan* who boasts about turning away from the truth. Therefore: *It was written down about him that whoever turned away to him as a friend, truly, he will cause him to go astray and will guide him to the punishment of the blaze.* **(22:4)** It is inevitable that such devils will lead their followers away from the truth in order to land them in hell. The chapter sarcastically calls this 'guidance', which can only be the guidance of one who leads to destruction and doom.

### THE STAGES OF HUMAN CREATION

Resurrection **(22:5)** is a return to a life that has been in existence. Thus, by human standards, it is easier than the origination of life in

the first place, although, by God's standards, the notion of easier or more difficult does not arise. To Him, initiating something out of nothing and restoring a life that had ended are the same. Both are the result of His will: *Truly His command when He wanted a thing is but to say to it: Be!* (36:82) But the Quran addresses people according to their own standards, rational thinking and understanding. It directs their hearts to reflect on what they see happening at every moment in their lives. If only they would reflect on it carefully, they would realize that it is miraculous. But to appreciate it as such, they need to look at it with an open heart and a reflective mind. Alas! They rarely ever do so.

It is a great divide separating the first status and the last. It points to the power that can bring about the resurrection, having brought about the initial creation. **(22:5)** Again the gulf between the primitive, idle elements found in dust and the gamete, a single living cell, is great indeed. It enfolds the great secret of life about which human beings know only a very little, despite the passage of millions of years in which countless numbers of idle elements have been transformed into living cells in a continuous process that never stops. It is a secret that we can only observe and record, without ever being able to initiate, no matter how ambitious we may be. And then there are other secrets, like that of the transformation of the gamete into a clinging cell mass, and the transformation of this cell mass into an embryo which is then transformed into a human being.

Then this clinging cell mass is transformed into an embryo which at first is without shape or distinction. Subsequently a transformation overtakes it to give it a form that begins with a skeleton that is later fleshed up. Alternatively, the uterus may reject it if God wills not to let it complete its cycle. *So that we make it manifest to you.* **(22:5)** This clause indicates that there is a pause between the embryonic stage and the child. This clause refers to the numerous signs of God's limitless power, and the reference coincides with the appearance of organs in the embryo.

The sign moves on to refer to the next stage in the development of the foetus: *We establish in the wombs whom We will for a term, that which is determined.* **(22:5)** Whatever God wills to complete its cycle will rest in its mother's womb until its time of birth.*And, again, We bring you out as infant children.* **(22:5)** Again we say, what a wide gulf separating the first stage and this final one!

The chapter continues with a new cycle that starts with the newborn child, after it has left its hiding place where it went through a series of great miracles, away from all beholders. Then it is time for a new phase, so that: *And, again, you may reach the coming of age.*

**(22:5)** You will attain your full growth: physically, mentally and psychologically.

Some simply forget the beginning before they reach the end. It is like God says: *And among you there is he who is returned to the most wretched lifetime so that he knows not anything after some knowledge.* **(22:5)** They lose the knowledge that once was a source of pride to them, leading them even to argue about God, His existence and His attributes. Now all such knowledge disappears from their minds and consciousness.

The sign then moves on to portray other scenes of creation and living creatures on earth and in the world of plants. **(22:5)** The state of being dry and barren, which is expressed in the Arabic text with one word, *hamidah*, is a state in between life and death. This is how the earth is when it is starved of water, the basic ingredient for life and the living. Thus, when rain water is poured over it, it stirs and swells. This is a remarkable movement which the Quran recorded many centuries before human science. When soil is very dry and then rain falls over it, it makes a movement like shaking or stirring. It absorbs the water and swells. It is then full of life, bringing forth blooming vegetation that radiates pleasure. Is there anything more pleasing to the eye than seeing life bloom in an area that has long remained barren? Here we see how the Quran speaks of a bond between all living creatures, citing them all as one of God's numerous signs. This is a remarkable reference to the fact that the essence of life is one in all the living, and to the unity of the will that brings life into being on earth, as in plants, animals and the human being.

### THE ULTIMATE TRUTH

That is because God alone is the Ultimate Truth; and He alone brings the dead to life; and He has the power to will anything. *That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything.* **(22:6-22:7)**

Bringing the dead to life: *That is because God, He is The Truth, and it is He Who gives life to the dead and He is Powerful over everything* **(22:6)** is to re-initiate life in what has been dead. The One who originated life in the first instance is the One who brings it back in the final stage. *And, truly, the Hour is that which arrives. There is no doubt about it and that God will raise up whoever is in the graves.* **(22:7)** They will then be given their reward for whatever they did in this first life. Such resurrection is dictated by the purpose of creation.

But despite all this evidence some people continue to dispute God's existence: **(22:8-22:10)**

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

### Developing Criteria for Evaluation

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever

does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

## Lesson 103(2). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empowering Constancy, Courage

**How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?**

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

### Signs 22:11-22:22

**Madinah:** *And among humanity is he who worships God*
*on the fringes.*
*If good lit on him, he is at rest with it.*
*And if a test lit on him, he turned completely about.*
*He lost the present and the world to come.*
*That, it is the clear loss.* (22:11)
*He calls to other than God what neither hurts him nor profits him.*
*That it is a far wandering astray.* (22:12)

*He calls to him whose hurting is nearer than his profiting.*
*Miserable was the defender and miserable*
*was the acquaintance.* (22:13
*Truly, God will cause to enter those who have believed*
*and did as the ones accord with morality,*
*Gardens beneath which rivers run.*
*Truly, God accomplishes what He wants.* (22:14)
*Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him,*
*in the present and in the world to come,*
*let him stretch out a cord to heaven.*
*Again, let him sever it.*
*Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes*
*to put away what enrages him.* (22:15)
*And, thus, We caused signs to descend, clear portents.*
*And that God guides whom He wants.* (22:16)
*Truly, those who believed and those who became Jews and the*
*Sabeans and the Christians and the Zoroastrians*
*and those who ascribed partners—*
*truly, God will distinguish between them*
*on the Day of Resurrection.*
*Truly, God over everything is a Witness.* (22:17)
*Have you not considered that to God prostrates to Him*
*whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in and on the earth*
*and the sun and the moon and the stars,*
*the mountains, the trees and the moving creatures,*
*and many of humanity while there are many*
*on whom the punishment will be realized.*
*And He whom God despises, then, there is no one who honors him.*
*Truly, God accomplishes whatever He wills.* (22:18)
*These two disputants strove against one another about their Lord.*
*Then, for those who were ungrateful*
*garments of fire will be cut out for them.*
*Over their heads, scalding water will be unloosed* (22:19)
*whereby what is in their bellies will be dissolved*
*and their skins.* (22:20)
*And for them are maces of iron.* (22:21)
*Whenever they wanted to go forth from there because of lament,*
*they will be caused to return to it*
*and experience the punishment of the burning.* (22:22)

## COMMENTARY°

### A CONDITIONAL APPROACH TO FAITH

The chapter then paints a picture of another type of person. Al-

though this type was definitely present in the early days of the Quranic message, it is also present in every generation. It is the type that weighs up faith against what profit or loss he is likely to achieve as a result. Thus, his approach to faith is the same as any business transaction he conducts. Some people worship God on the borderline [of faith]. **(22:11-22:13)**

Contrasted with this is the person who looks at faith as a commercial endeavor: *If good lit on him, he is at rest with it.* He would say that faith is beneficial, bringing in material gains, allowing plants to grow, efforts to be fruitful, goods to sell well and transactions to be profitable. But if it turns out otherwise, then he takes a totally different stance: *And if a test lit on him, he turned completely about. He lost the present and the world to come.* **(22:11)** His loss in this life is reflected in the misfortune he cannot tolerate, and the calamity that did not bring him back to complete reliance on God. Therefore , he also loses the hereafter by turning away from faith, rejecting the guidance that was made available to him.

Undoubtedly, the person who turns away from faith once hardship befalls him exposes himself to utter loss: *That, it is the clear loss.* **(22:11)** He is deprived of trust, reassurance and contentedness, in addition to his loss of wealth, children, health or other losses with which God puts His servants to the test. For God requires His servants to demonstrate their trust in Him, to patiently persevere in the face of adversity, as well as to dedicate their lives to His cause and to His will. Moreover, he loses the life to come and all that it promises of bliss, happiness and being close to God. This is indeed a great loss.

So where does the person who worships God on the border line go when he strays from God? In simple terms: *He calls to other than God what neither hurts him nor profits him.* **(22:12)** He may invoke an idol or a statue in old fashioned ignorance, or jahiliyyah, or he may invoke a person, or some authority, or interest, like the different forms of *jahiliyyah* that exist at any time or place, whenever human beings abandon belief in God's Oneness and turn their backs on His guidance. But what does all this represent? It is all going astray from the only method in which invocation is of use: *That it is a far wandering astray.* **(22:12)** Indeed when anyone resorts to invoking such beings instead of God, he takes himself very far away from the truth and the right way leading to it.

*He calls to him whose hurting is nearer than his profiting. Miserable was the defender and miserable was the acquaintance* **(22:13)** be that an idol, Satan, or a human being providing support or protection. None of these can cause the invoker either harm or benefit; in-

deed, they are more likely to bring him harm than benefit. This harm results, in the spiritual world, from overburdening one's heart with myth and humiliation. As for the material world, its harm is self-evident. And above all, it brings about utter loss in the life to come. Therefore , the chapter states: *Miserable was the defender* which is powerless, able to cause neither harm nor benefit. *And miserable was the acquaintance.* who brings on such utter loss. All this applies equally to whether the patron and the friend are idols and statues, or human beings raised to the status of deities or semi-deities.

### JUDGMENT BETWEEN ALL CREEDS

As for those who truly believe in God's Oneness, God prepares for them what is much better than all the material comforts and benefits this life may provide: *Truly, God will cause to enter those who have believed and did as the ones accord with morality, Gardens beneath which rivers run. Truly, God accomplishes what He wants.* **(22:14)** Therefore, anyone who endures adversity or a test should remain steadfast and persevere. He must also continue to place his trust in God and His mercy and support, believing that only He can relieve his adversity and reward him for his perseverance.

A person who loses his trust in God's help, both in this life and in the life to come, and despairs of God's grace when he finds himself under severe pressure or adversity, may do with himself whatever he is able to do. But nothing he does will ever change his lot or relieve him of his problems: *Whoever had been thinking that God will never help him, in the present and in the world to come, let him stretch out a cord to heaven. Again, let him sever it. Then, let him look on whether his cunning causes to put away what enrages him.* **(22:15)**

With such a clear exposition of examples of people who benefit by, and follow, divine guidance as well as those who go astray, God has sent this Quran from on high. Thus, people who open their hearts to it will benefit by it and receive God's guidance: *And, thus, We caused signs to descend, clear portents. And that God guides whom He wants.* **(22:16)**

God has willed that guidance and error are to be granted. Therefore, whoever seeks guidance will have it in fulfilment of God's will and according to His law. The same applies to one who wishes to follow error and to stray from the truth. The chapter here only mentions guidance because this is what fits with the context. As for the different sects and their divergent beliefs, it is God who judges them all on the Day of Judgment. He is perfectly aware of whatever each of them incorporates of the truth and what falsehood they contain: **(22:17)**

Human beings determine the way they follow according to their ideas, tendencies and desires. By nature, the rest of the universe submits to its Creator, prostrating itself before Him: **(22:18)**

When we reflect on this sign we find countless creatures, some of which we know and some we do not; and we glance at an infinite number of worlds, many of which we do not begin to know; as also an endless variety of mountains, trees and beasts that live on earth, man's abode. All these, without exception, join a single procession that prostrates itself in humble submission to God, addressing its worship, in perfect harmony, to Him alone. And out of all these creatures, the human being alone has a special case, as people diverge: *Have you not considered that to God prostrates to Him whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in and on the earth and the sun and the moon and the stars, the mountains, the trees and the moving creatures, and many of humanity* because of their rejection of the truth. Thus, the human being stands out on his own, unique in that great, harmonious procession.

The sign concludes with a statement making clear that whoever deserves punishment will inevitably be humbled and disgraced: *while there are many on whom the punishment will be realized.* **(22:18)** How could such a person be honored when all honor and respect are granted by God. In other words, anyone who submits to any being other than God Almighty, to whom the entire universe willingly submits, will be disgraced.

### WIDELY DIVERGENT ENDS

The next passage draws a scene of the Day of Judgment when the honor bestowed by God on His faithful servants and the humiliation suffered by the others are shown as though they are happening here and now. These two adversaries have become engrossed in contention about their Lord: **(22:19-22:22)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others'

claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself

## Lesson 103(3). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Persevering in Goodness

### What is perseverance?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

### What does persevering in goodness mean?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

## Signs 22:23-22:25

**Madinah:** *Truly, God will cause to enter those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,*
*Gardens beneath which rivers run.*
*They are adorned in them with bracelets of gold and pearls.*

*And their garments in it will be of silk.* (22:23)
*And they were guided to what is good of the saying*
*and they were guided to the Path of Him*
*Who is Worthy of Praise.* (22:24)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful and bar from the way of God*
*and from the Masjid al-Haram that We made for humanity*
*—equal for the ones who give themselves up*
*and the ones who are desert dwellers—*
*and whoever wants to violate it with injustice,*
*We will cause him to experience a painful punishment.* (22:25)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE FIRST SANCTUARY

Such was the practice of the ungrateful **(22:25)**: they turned people away from the faith that God had established for humanity, providing a direct way to Him. They fought hard to prevent people from following the code He had chosen for human life. They also stopped Muslims from offering the pilgrimage and visitation, as was the case when the events that started with such prevention led to the signing of a peace agreement at al-Hudaybiyyah. God made this mosque an area of peace and safety for all people, where they have no fear of anyone. This applied to everyone living in Makkah, and to all those who travelled from distant areas to visit the mosque. Thus, the Kabah and the mosque around it form a House of God where all people are equal. None can claim any right of ownership or any distinction whatsoever: *And from the Masjid al-Haram that We made for humanity—equal for the ones who give themselves up and the ones who are desert dwellers* **(22:25)**

This law God established for His Sacred House preceded all attempts by human beings to establish a sanctuary where no arms are allowed, opponents are safe, bloodshed is ended and everyone enjoys peace and security. No one can claim any favor for observing these rules. They are a privilege equally extended to all people at all times.

We see how the Quranic message was far ahead of the rest of humanity, establishing an area of peace and security for all, as well as a home open to every human being. Indeed, the Quran threatens with painful suffering anyone who tries to cause any deviation from this well-defined system: *and whoever wants to violate it with injustice, We will cause him to experience a painful punishment.* **(22:25)** What is, then, the punishment meted out to a person who does not stop at seeking to profane the Sacred Mosque, but goes on to actually do it? The Quranic sign threatens with grievous suffering anyone who either seeks this, or has the intention of doing so. This makes

the warning much more powerful and far-reaching.

Another aspect of the fine style of the Quran is the omission of the predicate in the first sentence of the sign. Thus, the sentence states: *Truly, those who were ungrateful and bar from the way of God and from the Masjid al-Haram.* **(22:25)** It does not say what happens to them, or what punishment they will receive. Thus, the sign suggests that their mere mention and description is more than enough to determine their fate.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it

## LESSON 103(4). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM

### WHAT IS EMPATHETIC ALTRUISM?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)
## SIGNS 22:26-22:33

**Madinah:** *And mention when We placed Abraham*
*in the place of the House that:*
*You will ascribe nothing as partners with Me.*
*And You purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it*
*and the ones who are standing up, and the ones who bow down*
*and the ones who prostrate themselves.* (22:26)
*Announce to humanity the pilgrimage to Makkah.*
*They will approach you on foot and on every thin camel.*
*They will approach from every deep ravine* (22:27)
*that they bear witness to what profits them*
*and remember the Name of God on known days*

*over whatever He provided them from flocks of animals.*
*Then, eat of it and feed*
*the ones who are in misery and the poor.* (22:28)
*Again, let them finish their ritual cleanliness*
*and live up to their vows*
*and circumambulate the Ancient House.* (22:29)
*That was commanded! Whoever holds the sacred things of God in*
*honor, then, that is better for him with his Lord.*
*And permitted to you were the flocks,*
*but what will be recounted to you.*
*So avoid the disgrace of graven images*
*and avoid saying the untruth.* (22:30)
*Turn to God as monotheists not with Him*
*as ones who are polytheists.*
*And whoever ascribes partners with God,*
*it is as if he fell down from heaven and the birds snatch him*
*or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away.* (22:31)
*That was commanded! Whoever holds the waymarks of God*
*in honor, then, it is, truly, from hearts filled*
*with God-consciousness.* (22:32)
*For you in that is what profits for a term, that which is determined.*
*Again, their place of sacrifice is at the Ancient House.* (22:33)

## COMMENTARY°

### ESTABLISHING THE SANCTUARY

The chapter now refers to the establishment of this Sacred Mosque which the idolaters had usurped. They worshipped idols there and prevented believers in God's Oneness, who had purged themselves from idolatry, from entering it. Yet it was built by Abraham on God's own instructions. The chapter also mentions the fundamental basis of God's Oneness which served as the basis of the foundation of the Sacred Mosque. It also adds the purpose of its building as a place to worship God alone, a place where the dedicated could walk around it, and stand before it in submission to God: **(22:26-22:29)**

It was for celebrating the glory of God alone that this House was built. God showed its place to Abraham, and gave him clear instructions so that he raised it on proper foundations: ***You** will ascribe nothing as partners with Me.* It belongs to God alone, without partners of any sort. Abraham was also required to purify the House for those who come to it to perform the pilgrimage and for those who stand up in prayer there. **(22:26)** It is for those who worship God alone that this House was built. It has nothing to do with others who associate

partners with Him or address their worship to anyone other than Him.

### ANNOUNCING THE PILGRIMAGE

When Abraham completed building the Kabah as instructed, he was ordered to declare the duty of pilgrimage as binding on all people, and to call on them to fulfil this duty. God also promised him that people would respond to his call, and that they would come from all corners of the globe, either on foot, or using every kind of fast mount that becomes thin as a result of a long journey: *And You purify My House for the ones who circumambulate it and the ones who are standing up, and the ones who bow down and the ones who prostrate themselves.* **(22:27)**

The chapter then mentions some aspects and objectives of the pilgrimage: "so that they might experience much that shall be of benefit to them, and that they might extol the name of God on the days appointed [for sacrifice], over whatever heads of cattle He may have provided for them. Eat, then, of such [sacrificed cattle] and feed the unfortunate pool: **(22:28-22:29)**

It is at the same time a season of worship, when souls feel their purity as they sense that they are close to God in His Sacred House. People's spirits roam around the House, recalling memories that are associated with it, and see near and distant images. The memory of Abraham as he abandons his small child, Ishmael, born to him in old age, yet whom he left alone with his mother. As he turned away to leave, he addressed a prayer to God, one which clearly reflected an issuing from an apprehensive heart: *Our Lord! Truly I have lodged some of my offspring in an unsown valley by Your Holy House, O our Lord, that they may perform the formal prayer, Make the minds among humanity yearn for them and provide You them with fruits so that perhaps they will give thanks.* (14:37)

We remember Hagar as she tries to find water for herself and her young child in that exceedingly hot place where the Sacred House was yet to be built. We see her dashing to and fro between the two hills of al-Safa and al-Marwah, feel her exceeding thirst, and watch her fear for her child as she's weighed down with the strenuous effort involved. She returns after covering the distance seven times, feeling something approaching despair, only to find water springing up between the blessed child's hands. That water was the Well of Zamzam, a spring of mercy in the middle of a barren desert

### THE PILGRIMAGE CONFERENCE

But the pilgrimage is also a conference at which all Muslims gather. In it they find the beginning of their community, going back

ages in time to none other than their first father, Abraham: *And struggle for God in a true struggling. He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment. It is the creed of your father Abraham. He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity. So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and cleave firmly to God. He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper!* **(22:78)** There at the pilgrimage, they find the force that brings them all together, their qiblah to which they all turn as they stand up in prayer. They also find the banner under which they unite, namely, the banner of faith under which all distinctions of race, color or nationality are non-existent. They sense their power, of which they may often be oblivious; that is the power of their unity which is capable of sweeping everything before it, when they are united by faith alone. The pilgrimage is a conference where Muslims have the opportunity to get to know one another, discuss their affairs, coordinate their plans, group their forces, exchange commodities, information, experiences and other benefits. They organize their single well-integrated Muslim world once every year, under God's banner, close to His House, in the light of devotion to Him alone and the memories outlined, in the best place, time and atmosphere.

It is to this blessing that the sign refers: *that they bear witness to what profits them* **(22:28)** This applies to every generation according to its prevailing circumstances, needs, experience, and requirements. This is part of what God wants the pilgrimage to be, ever since He made it a duty incumbent upon all Muslims, and ordered Abraham to proclaim this duty to humanity. The chapter refers to some of the rituals of the pilgrimage and their purpose: *and remember the Name of God on known days over whatever He provided them from flocks of animals.* **(22:28)** This is a reference to the animal sacrifice that pilgrims offer on the four days of Eid. The Quranic sign refers first to the practice of extolling God's name at the time of the slaughter, highlighting the fact that the whole atmosphere is one of worship, and the purpose of the sacrifice is to get closer to God. Therefore, the chapter stresses the mentioning of God's name at the point of sacrifice, as though such mention is the aim of the whole sacrificial ritual.

The sacrifice itself commemorates the sacrifice that was given as a ransom for Ishmael. Thus, it commemorates a sign given by God, and the act of obedience by His two noble servants, Abraham and Ishmael, in addition to the element of charity involved as most of its meat is given to the poor. The 'heads of cattle' mentioned in

the Quranic sign refer to camels, cows, sheep and goats that are normally sacrificed. *Then, eat of it and feed the ones who are in misery and the poor.* **(22:28)**

The order to eat of one's sacrifice is one of permissibility and recommendation, while the order to feed the poor is one of duty and obligation. Perhaps the order that one should eat of one's own sacrifice is meant to show the poor that it is wholesome and of a quality that the person offering it does not disdain to eat from. The sacrifice signals the end of the state of consecration, or ihram, which means that the pilgrim may now shave his head, or cut his hair. Other ihram restrictions, such as prohibiting the plucking of armpit hair and nail cutting, are also relaxed. All this is referred to in this Quranic sign: *Again, let them finish their ritual cleanliness and live up to their vows* . **(22:29)** These vows are concerned with whatever people might have pledged to God, other than the sacrifice that is part of the pilgrimage rituals. *And circumambulate the Ancient House.* **(22:29)** This is a reference to the tawaf of ifadah, which falls due after attendance at `Arafat. This tawaf is also different from the tawaf of farewell which is offered shortly before departing from Makkah.

The Ancient House refers to the Sacred Mosque which God made immune from the power of all tyrants, and against collapse through the passage of time. It continues to be visited, ever since the time of Abraham, and will continue to be so for as long as God wills.

### FALL, SNATCH AND THE DEEP END

This is the story of how the Sacred House in Makkah was built and the basis on which it was founded. It was God who ordered His friend, Abraham, to raise this House making belief in God's Oneness its solid foundation. He further ordered Abraham to purify it of all idolatry, and to proclaim to humanity the duty of offering the pilgrimage to the House, where they mention God's name, not the names of false deities, over what they sacrifice of cattle He provides for them. They are to eat of it and to feed the needy and the poor in praise of God's name, not the name of anyone or anything else. This means that it is a sacred House where God's sanctities are respected. Paramount among these are the belief in God's Oneness, the opening of the House to worshippers who walk around it, stand before it in prayer, and bow and prostrate themselves to God, in addition to the prevention of bloodshed, the honoring of covenants and treaties, and the maintenance of peace. All this [is ordained by God]. Whoever honors God's sanctities, it will be better for him with his Lord. All kinds of cattle have been made lawful to you, except for what is specified to you [as forbidden]. **(22:30-22:31)** Honoring God's sanctities

instils a keen, watchful sense lest one should violate them. In God's measure, this is better for us. It is better in the realm of conscience and feeling, and better in this life generally. A watchful conscience is one which wants to remain pure, untainted. A community where God's sanctities are inviolable ensures a life of peace where people are secure, fearing no aggression or persecution, reassured of their comfort and safety.

The idolaters in Makkah used to consider as sacred certain animals, such as a slit-ear she-camel, a she-camel let loose for pasture, idol sacrifices for animal twin-births, and stallion-camel freed from work. They falsely attributed sanctity for such animals, while they violated God's clear sanctities. Therefore, the chapter makes clear at this juncture that all cattle are lawful to eat, except for those specified as forbidden, such as carrion, blood, the flesh of swine and any animal at the slaughter of which any name other than God's is invoked: *And permitted to you were the flocks, but what will be recounted to you.* **(22:30)** This has been made clear so that none other than God's sanctities are acknowledged, none enacts any legislation except God, and no one exercises judgement according to any law other than that of God.

While all cattle are made lawful, the chapter gives an order to steer away from the abomination of venerating idols. The idolaters used to slaughter their animals before idols that personified evil. Associating partners with God is also an evil that contaminates people's hearts and consciences in the same way as an impurity contaminates a garment or a place. Since the association of partners with God is an act of fabricating falsehood against Him, the chapter warns against saying anything untrue: *So avoid the disgrace of graven images and avoid saying the untruth.* **(22:30)**

The Quranic statement magnifies the offense of fabricating falsehood, putting it on a par with associating partners with God. A hadith related by Imam Ahmad states: "One day, the Prophet offered dawn prayers. When he stood up to leave, he said: 'Perjury is equal to associating partners with God.' He then recited this sign." What God wants of all people is that they should steer away from all types of associating partners with Him, as also steer away from saying anything untrue. They must maintain in absolute purity their belief in God's Oneness: *Turn to God as monotheists not with Him as ones who are polytheists.* **(22:31)** The chapter then paints a violent scene of a person who slips away from this pure concept of God's Oneness, and who falls into the depths of associating partners with Him. He is totally lost, as though he has never come to life. *And whoever ascribes partners with God, it is as if he fell down from heaven and the*

*birds snatch him or the wind hurled him to ruin in a place far away.* **(22:31)**

### A Sacrifice of Distinction

Having mentioned those who honor God's sanctities and the need to preserve and protect such sanctities, the chapter now speaks of honoring the symbols set up by God, which, in this instance, refers to the animals sacrificed as part of the pilgrimage rituals. This honor is manifested by choosing the best and most valuable animals for sacrifice: This is [to be borne in mind]. **(22:32-22:33)**

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined

how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.

I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.

I was able to turn the negatives into positives.

I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.

I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.

I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.

I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

## LESSON 103(5). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BEING FAIR AND JUST

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj) Signs 22:24-22:38

**Madinah:** *And for every community*
*We assigned devotional acts that they may remember*
*the Name of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals.*
*And your God is One God.*
*Submit to Him, and give* ***you*** *good tidings*
*to the ones who humble themselves,* (22:34)
*those who, when God was remembered,*
*their hearts took notice and the ones who remain steadfast*
*against whatever lit on them*
*and the ones who perform the formal prayer*
*and who spends out of what We provided them.* (22:35)
*We made for you the beasts of sacrifice*
*among the waymarks of God.*
*You have in them much good so remember the Name of God*
*over them, ones who are standing in ranks.*
*Then, when they collapsed on their sides,*
*eat from them and feed the ones who are paupers*
*and the ones who are poor persons who beg not.*
*Thus, We caused them to be subservient to you*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (22:36)
*Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God,*
*rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him.*
*Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you*
*that you magnify God in that He guided you.*
*And give thou good tidings*
*to the ones who are doers of good.* (22:37)
*Truly, God defends those who believed.*
*Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer.* (22:38)

### Commentary°

The Quran mentions that such a sacrifice ritual was known in many communities: **(22:34-22:35)** The Quran message purifies feelings and intentions, setting them all for one goal. Thus, intentions, actions, worship and customs all serve a common purpose, setting life on the sound basis of pure faith. This is the underlying reason for prohibiting eating any meat at the slaughter of which any name other than God's is invoked. Indeed it is essential to invoke God's name at the sacrifice, giving prominence to such invocation, as if the sacrifice is done merely to invoke His name: *And for every community We assigned devotional acts that they may remember the Name*

*of God over what We provided them of flocks of animals.* **(22:34)** This is followed by a clear statement of God's Oneness: *And your God is One God. Submit to Him.* **(22:34)** An order of submission to Him is the logical conclusion: *Submit to Him.* **(22:34)** Such surrender should be an act of choice, done with complete reassurance and without any compulsion: *and give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves.* **(22:34-22:35)** The mere mention of God's name stirs in them a feeling of awe that manifests itself in their actions. *And give you good tidings to the ones who humble themselves.* **(22:35)** They do not object to whatever happens to them by God's will. They also *and the ones who perform the formal prayer* showing thus that they worship God as He wishes to be worshipped. Moreover, they do not grudgingly hold on to what they have. Rather, they *spend out of what We provided them.* **(22:35)** Thus a close link is established between faith and worship rituals. The latter derive from faith and are manifestations of it. Therefore , they are described as symbols set up by God. What is important in all this is that life itself derives its color from faith, ensuring unity between beliefs and actions.

The chapter continues to emphasize the link between faith and worship rituals as it outlines some pilgrimage duties, speaking here of the sacrifice of cows and camels: *We made for you the beasts of sacrifice among the waymarks of God.* **(22:36)** Camels are mentioned here in particular because they are the largest and most valuable of sacrificial animals. *You have in them much good so remember the Name of God over them, ones who are standing in ranks.* **(22:36)** Camels are slaughtered standing on three legs, while the fourth is tied. *Then, when they collapsed on their sides, eat from them and feed the ones who are paupers and the ones who are poor persons who beg not. .* **(22:36)** The owners of the slaughtered sacrifice are recommended to partake of its meat, but they are required to give gifts to the poor who are contented and do not ask for charity, as well as those whose poverty makes them beg. It is because all these benefits are provided that people should give thanks to God:*Thus, We caused them to be subservient to you so that perhaps you will give thanks.* **(22:36)**

As people are commanded to slaughter their sacrifice invoking God's name, it is made clear to them that *Neither their flesh nor their blood attains to God, rather, God-consciousness from you attains Him.* **(22:37)** He has no need of them. What reaches Him, however, is people's piety and consciousness of Him. It is the intention behind any action that gives it its worth. Compare this with the practice of the ungrateful idolaters who used to splatter the blood of their sacri-

fices over their idols. How crude and ugly! *Thus, He caused them to be subservient to you that you magnify God in that He guided you.* **(22:37)** It is He who has guided you to the proper and true faith of submission to Him alone. Thus, you have become aware of the proper relation between the human being and God and the true meaning of action undertaken purely for God's sake. *And give you good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* putting their beliefs, worship and life activities on a proper footing.

Thus Muslims turn to God with every move they make, at any time of the day or night, conscious of His majesty, seeking His pleasure. With this attitude, life becomes a series of acts of worship, fulfilling God's purpose of creation. Life on earth is set on its proper basis, with a solid link between this world and the next.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view

## Lesson 103(6). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Logic (being reasonable)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, of what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their an-

swers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

> Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
> How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[1]

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)
## Signs 22:39-22:48

**Madinah:** *Permission was given to those who are fought against*

*because they, they were wronged.*
*And, truly, Powerful is God to help them,* (22:39)
*those who were driven out from their abodes without right*
*because they say: Our Lord is God! If not for God*
*driving back humanity, some by some other,*
*cloisters would be demolished and churches and synagogues*
*and mosques in which is remembered in it*
*the Name of God frequently.*
*Truly, God will help whoever helps Him.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (22:40)
*Those who, if We established them firmly on the earth,*
*they performed the formal prayer and they gave the purifying alms*
*and they commanded to that which is honorable*
*and they prohibited that which is unlawful.*
*And with God is the Ultimate End of the command.* (22:41)
*And if they deny* ***you****, surely, the folk of Noah denied before* ***you***
*and Ad and Thamud* (22:42)
*and the folk of Abraham and the folk of Lot* (22:43)
*and the companions of Midian.*
*And Moses was denied, but I granted indulgence*
*to the ones who are ungrateful.*
*Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* (22:44)
*And how many a town We caused to perish*
*while they are ones who are unjust*
*so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins*
*and how much well water ignored and a tall palace!* (22:45)
*Journey they not through the earth?*
*Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable*
*or ears with which to hear?*
*Truly, it is not their sight that is in darkness,*
*but their hearts that are within their breasts*
*that are in darkness!* (22:46)
*And seek they that* ***you*** *hasten the punishment?*
*And God never breaks His Promise.*
*And, truly, a day with thy Lord*
*is as a thousand years of what you number.* (22:47)
*How many a town I granted indulgence*
*while it is one that is unjust.*
*Again, I took it and to Me was the Homecoming.* (22:48)

## COMMENTARY°

It has not been God's will to leave unarmed the advocates of faith, truth and goodness so that they face the forces of evil and false-

hood relying only on the power of their faith, or on the depth of goodness in their hearts. The material power of evil can be very strong, able to shake people and blind their eyes. Besides, people can only endure hardships and trials up to a certain point. God knows all this and the limits of people's ability. Therefore , He wanted the believers to endure the hardship only for a short period during which they would acquire the means to resist and to defend themselves. When they achieved this, they were given permission to fight aggression. Before stating this permission for self defense, God also tells them that it is He who will defend them: *Truly, God defends those who believed.* **(22:38)** He also tells them that He dislikes their enemies because of their treachery and ingratitude. *Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer.* **(22:38)** He has judged their position to be fully justified, because they are the ones who have endured injustice and persecution. They do not resort to aggression against others:*Permission was given to those who are fought against because they, they were wronged.* **(22:39)** Because they are the ones at the receiving end of wrongful aggression, they are reassured that God will grant them His support and protection: *And, truly, Powerful is God to help them,* **(22:39)**

Furthermore, they have all the justification for going to war. They have been chosen to undertake a great humanitarian task, the benefits of which will not be theirs alone. Indeed these benefits will accrue to all believers. Their fight will ensure that people shall enjoy the freedom of belief and worship. Besides, they are the ones who have been wronged, the ones driven out of their homes without valid justification: *those who were driven out from their abodes without right because they say: Our Lord is God!* **(22:40)**

It is the most truthful word any person can say, and the word everyone should say. Yet, it is because of their saying this that they have been driven out of their homes. Therefore why such injustice does not carry any semblance of right action. The Quranic statement makes it clear that these victims of aggression have no personal objective to fight for; instead, they fight only for their faith. They seek no worldly gain. Personal and national interests that give rise to conflicts, alliances and wars are of no appeal to them. Beyond that, we have the general rule that makes it clear that faith needs to be defended: **(22:40)**

We note here that the sign mentions monasteries where priests devote all their time to worship, as well as places of public worship for Christians, Jews and Muslims. They are all vulnerable and can be destroyed, despite their sanctity and dedication for worship. Evil will not respect the fact that these places are made for extolling God's

name. They are protected only through people's efforts, with the advocates of faith standing up to repel falsehood's aggression. Indeed, falsehood and evil will not stop their aggression unless they realize that the truth has enough power to counter their own. Truth may he valued by people, but such value is not enough to provide it with protection against aggression in man's world. It requires the appropriate means of self defense.

### IN DEFENSE OF THE BELIEVERS

We need to reflect a little on these short statements that provide profound insight into human nature. The first thing to note is that the permission to fight back is granted by God to those against whom the idolaters had waged a wrongful aggression. This permission starts with a statement that God defends the believers and dislikes aggressors: *Truly, God defends those who believed. Truly, God loves not any who is an ungrateful betrayer.* **(22:38)**

These are the people who give succor to God, as they implement the way of life He has chosen for humanity. They rely on God alone, to the exclusion of any other power. It is such people that God promises victory, and His promise is most assured. It will never fail. Here we see again that the victory granted to the Muslim community relies on the fulfilment of its conditions and the discharge of certain responsibilities. All matters rest with God who determines what course events should take. He may change a defeat into victory or a victory into defeat when the foundation is not solid or responsibilities are ignored: **(22:41)**

The victory granted by God is one that leads to the establishment of His code in human life. It is a code that ensures that truth, justice and freedom are fulfilled so that they can bring goodness into human life. No individual self-aggrandizement is allowed; no personal greed or desire tolerated. Such a victory has well-defined conditions, duties and a price. It is not granted as a personal favor to anyone. Nor does it continue when its objectives and duties are not fulfilled.

### PAST COMMUNITIES PUNISHED

If they accuse you of falsehood, before their time, the people of Noah, the Ad and Thamud similarly accused [their prophets] of falsehood, as did the people of Abraham and the people of Lot, and the dwellers of Madyan; and so too was Moses accused of falsehood. [In every case] *I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful. Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* **(22:42-22:44)** It is the same pattern seen over and over again, in all past messages up to the final one. Messengers are given signs and revelations, and there will always be those who deny the truth. Thus, when the idol-

aters in Makkah denied the message of the Prophet Muhammad, it was by no means a new trend nor did the Prophet experience an unknown pattern of hostility.

Moses, however, is mentioned on his own as though the reference to him constitutes a special paragraph: *And Moses was denied, but I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful.* **(22:44)** Unlike other messengers, Moses was not accused of falsehood by his own people. It was Pharaoh and his chiefs that opposed Moses, levelling all sorts of accusations on him. Moreover, Moses was given very clear and numerous signs. Nevertheless, in all these cases, God granted the ungrateful respite for a while, in the same way as He now gave the ungrateful, the Prophet's own people who fiercely opposed him, time to reflect. He then punished all those past communities very severely. This is followed by a rhetorical question that stresses the frightening effect of God's punishment: *Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* **(22:44)** The Arabic word, *nakir*, used here for 'rejection', carries added connotations of violent change. The question needs no answer, as it is well known: it was a rejection demonstrated through great floods, destruction, earthquakes, fearful hurricanes, and the like. Having made this very quick reference to the fate suffered by those communities, the chapter adds a general reference to past communities which suffered because of their attitude to the divine message: *And how many a town We caused to perish while they are ones who are unjust so that it be one that had fallen down in ruins and how much well water ignored and a tall palace!* **(22:45)** Numerous indeed were those towns and cities which suffered their inevitable doom as a result of their evildoing. Their fate is shown here most effectively: *fallen down in ruins.*

As the chapter portrays these scenes, it adds another rhetorical question about their effects on the ungrateful: *Journey they not through the earth? Have they not hearts with which to be reasonable or ears with which to hear? Truly, it is not their sight that is in darkness, but their hearts that are within their breasts that are in darkness!* **(22:46)** Emphasis is here placed on the location of hearts in people's bodies, which serves to amplify the blindness of those hearts in particular. Had those hearts been able to reflect on the scenes portrayed, they would have remembered and people's eyes would have been tearful. They would have moved towards faith, at least as a result of fearing an end like the ones that befell other communities.

But the ungrateful did not wish to reflect on such scenes demonstrating God's punishment. Instead they tried to hasten their own punishment which God had delayed until a particular point in time known only to Him: *And seek they that you hasten the punishment?* **(22:47)**

It is the same story with the ungrateful in all generations. They see with their eyes the ruins of cities destroyed for their wrongdoing, and they hear their histories, but they, nevertheless, follow in their footsteps overlooking their fate. If they are reminded of what happened to earlier communities, they nonetheless consider it unlikely that they will suffer the same fate. But if God grants them respite to test them further, they grow arrogant and heedless. They even ridicule anyone reminding them that they could suffer as people before them suffered. What is more they add to such ridicule a request for their punishment to be hastened. Here they are told that: *And God never breaks His Promise.*Such a promise or warning will inevitably come to pass at the time God, in His infinite wisdom, determines. If people hasten its fulfilment, it will not be made to come before its appointed time, because its delay is for a purpose known to God, and that purpose will not fail so as to grant human beings their ignorant wishes. Moreover, time is calculated differently by God: *And, truly, a day with your Lord is as a thousand years of what you number.* **(22:47)**

He gave respite to many past communities, but such respite did not save them from punishment when they persisted in their wrongdoing. This is a rule which God has set in operation and it cannot fail:*How many a town I granted indulgence while it is one that is unjust. Again, I took it and to Me was the Homecoming.* **(22:48)** Why would the ungrateful Arab, then, hasten their own punishment and deride God's warning when it is only a temporary respite that God grants such people?

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confi-

dent you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

## Lesson 103(7). Critical Thinking Quranic Intellectual Standard

### Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitive means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitive indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)

### Signs 22:49-22:57

**Madinah:** *Say: O humanity! Truly, I am only*
*a clear warner to you.* (22:49)
*So those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality,*
*for them is forgiveness and a generous provision.* (22:50)
*And those who endeavored against Our signs, ones who strive to*
*thwart, those are the Companions of Hellfire.* (22:51)
**Makkah:** *And We sent not before you any Messenger*
*nor Prophet but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him.*
*But God nullifies what Satan casts.*
*Moreover, God set clear His Signs*
*and God is Knowing, Wise.* (22:52)
*for He makes what Satan casts a test*
*for those who in their hearts is a sickness*
*and their hearts, ones that harden.*
*And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* (22:53)
*And those who were given the knowledge*
*know that it is The Truth from your Lord,*
*so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him.*
*And, truly, God is One Who Guides*
*those who believed to a straight path.* (22:54)
*And those who were ungrateful*
*cease not to be hesitant about it*
*until the Hour approaches them suddenly*
*or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day.* (22:55)
**Madinah:** *On that Day the dominion will belong to God.*
*He will give judgment between them.*
*So those who believed and did as the ones accord with morality*
*will be in Gardens of Bliss.* (22:56)

*And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,*
*for them will be a despised punishment.* (22:57)

## COMMENTARY°

### A PARTING OF THE WAYS

At this point in the narrative describing the fate of past communities, and outlining the rule concerning those who persist in denying God's messages, the chapter addresses the Prophet instructing him to warn people and explain the inevitable outcome: *ay: O humanity! Truly, I am only a clear warner to you. So those who believed and did as ones in accord with morality, for them is forgiveness and a generous provision. And those who endeavored against Our signs, ones who strive to thwart, those are the Companions of Hellfire.* **(22:49-22:51)** We note that in this context, the Prophet's task is clearly stated as one of giving people a clear and plain warning, that leaves no room for ambiguity. This fits the immediate situation of stubborn rejection of God's message that makes people hasten their own doom.

His message, making its principles and values clear, perfects His revelations and removes all doubt that may surround its values and method of action. Whenever We sent forth a messenger or a prophet before you, and he was hoping for something, Satan would throw some aspersion on his wishes. **(22:52-22:54)**

There are many reports about the events leading to the revelation of these signs,but Ibn Kathir describes all these reports as lacking in authenticity. The most detailed of these reports is attributed to al-Zuhri, a leading Hadith scholar of the generation that followed the Prophet's Companions. It mentions that Chapter 53, The Star, was revealed at a time when some idolaters said to one another that they would leave Muhammad and his Companions alone if only he would say a good word about the idols they worshipped. The report goes as follows:

They felt that the Prophet did not criticize the Jews and Christians who opposed him in the same way as he denounced the practices of the idolaters. The Prophet was very grieved by their continued denial of his message and the persecution they inflicted on his Companions. He still hoped that they would be able to recognize divine guidance. God then revealed the chapter, The Star (see *Book Year 2*), including the following: (53:19-53:21) At this mention that the pagan's worshipped idols, Satan added the words: these are the sublime birds, whose intercession is to be hoped for. These were nothing but the rhyming words of Satan's invention, but they touched the hearts of all idolaters in Makkah who kept repeating them and expressing their delight to one another, claiming that Muhammad

had returned to his old religion, practiced by his people.

When the Prophet completed the recitation of the chapter, he prostrated himself, and all those present, Muslims and idolaters alike, also prostrated themselves. The only exception was al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah, an old man, who took a handful of dust and placed it on his forehead. Both parties were amazed at this common prostration when the Prophet prostrated himself. Muslims were amazed that the idolaters should prostrate themselves when they did not believe in God, particularly because they were unaware of what Satan made the idolaters hear. The idolaters, on the other hand, were reassured by what Satan had introduced through the Prophet'shopes and implied to them that the Prophet read those words as he recited the chapter.

Therefore, they prostrated themselves because their idols were praised.All this was soon widely known, and Satan helped to circulate it. Before long, the news travelled to Abyssinia, where some Muslims had sought refuge, including Uthman ibn Maun. They were told that the people of Makkah had embraced the Quranic message and offered the formal prayer with the Prophet. They also came to know of al-Walid ibn al-Mughayrah's gesture of prostration on a handful of dust he raised to his forehead. They felt that Muslims were now safe in Makkah, which prompted some of them to speedily return. But then God nullified Satan's aspersion and made His revelation clear and perfect, preserving it from Satanic fabrication. It was as God said: *And We sent not before you any Messenger nor Prophet, but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him. But God nullifies what Satan casts. Again, God set clear His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise, for He makes what Satan casts a test for those who in their hearts is a sickness and their hearts, ones that harden. And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* **(22:52-22:53)** When God made His judgment clear and purged from it the Satanic rhyme, the idolaters increased their persecution of the Muslims.

### FOILING SATAN'S EFFORTS

Does God foil Satan's scheming and make His revelations clear so that the right course to be followed is clearly mapped? *And God is Knowing, Wise.* Those with sickness in their hearts and minds find in such situations fertile ground for controversy: *And, truly, the ones who are unjust are in a wide breach.* **(22:53)** At the opposite end, people endowed with true knowledge and wisdom are reassured by God's clear verdict: *And those who were given the knowledge know that it is The Truth from your Lord, so that they believe in it and humble their hearts to Him. And, truly, God is One Who Guides those*

*who believed to a straight path.* **(22:54)**

### Hasty Hopes

The chapter adds a comment on the fact that God protects His message against Satan's scheming, emphasizing that those who reject it will be vanquished, and that humiliating torture awaits them.

Yet the ungrateful will not cease to be in doubt about Him until the Last Hour comes suddenly upon them, or suffering befalls them on a day with no more [days] to follow. On that day, all dominion shall belong to God. He shall judge between them. Thus, all who believe and do righteous deeds shall find themselves in gardens of bliss, whereas for the ungrateful who have denied Our revelations there shall be shameful suffering in store: **(22:55-22:57)**

Such is the attitude of the ungrateful to the Quran in general. It is mentioned here as it closely relates to their attitude to whatever aspersion Satan may try to cast in the hopes of God's Prophets and Messengers, i.e., the two situations are inter-linked. They continue to have doubts about the Quran because their hearts have not felt the sort of pleasure and happiness it imparts so that they appreciate the truth it advocates. They continue to be in such state of doubt *until the Hour approaches them suddenly or the punishment approaches them on a withering Day.* **(22:55)** Such suffering befalls them on the Day of Judgement, which is described in the Quranic text as sterile, in the sense that it is not followed by any other day.

Such suffering is the right recompense for their scheming against the divine faith, denying God's clear revelations, and for their wilful refusal to obey Him. **(22:56-22:57)**

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Developing Quranic Critical Thinking Skills
### Learning to Think Quranically

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.

I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

## Lesson 103(8). Critical Thinking Quranic Intellectual Standard

### Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic signs. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj)
## Signs 22:58-22:64

**Madinah:** *And those who emigrated in the way of God,*
*then, they were slain or died,*
*certainly, God will provide them a fairer provision.*
*And, truly, God, certainly,*
*He is Best of the ones who provide.* (22:58)
*Certainly, He will cause them to enter a gate*
*with which they will be well-pleased.*
*And, truly, God is, certainly, Knowing, Forbearing.* (22:59)
*That is so! And whoever chastises for injustice*
*with the like of what he was chastised,*
*and, again, suffered an injustice,*
*God will, certainly, help him.*
*Truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving.* (22:60)
*That is because God causes the nighttime*
*to be interposed into the daytime*
*and He causes the daytime*
*to be interposed into the nighttime.*
*And, truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.* (22:61)
*That is because God, He is The Truth.*
*And what they call to other than Him, it is falsehood.*
*And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great.* (22:62)
*Have you not considered that God caused water*
*to descend from heaven?*
*Then, in the morning, the earth becomes green.*
*Truly, God is Subtle, Aware.* (22:63
*To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*And, truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* (22:64)

## COMMENTARY°

### A FITTING REWARD

Migration, or leaving one's home, to serve God's cause represents a desertion of every comfort whether it be family, community and childhood memories, or property and material comforts. **(22:58-22:59)** When one puts one's faith ahead of all this for no other reason than to earn God's pleasure, one demonstrates that such a prize is more valuable than all material goods.

Those who are targets of human aggression may not be able to tolerate such treatment or bear it with patience. They would rather respond in kind, measure for measure. If aggressors persist, and continue with their oppression, God is certain to support the oppressed and help them against those who are unjust: **(22:60)** The condition that must be fulfilled for God's help to be forthcoming is that the action must be one of retaliation, seeking to repel aggression. Such help is not forthcoming for aggression of any sort. Moreover, retaliation must not be excessive; rather it must be limited in scale, replying, measure for measure, to the original aggression.

The comment made in the sign on the nature of this retaliation is that *Truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving.* It is He who forgives and absolves. Human beings have no say in this. Indeed they may prefer to retaliate and to repel aggression. Given their nature, they are allowed to pursue such retaliatory action. God will help them t achieve victory.

God's promise of help to victims of aggression is linked to un versal laws that testify to His power. These laws operate most accurately, without fail, which, in turn, suggests that God's help to those at the receiving end of aggression is one of the unfailing universal laws He has set in operation. **(22:61)**

### ABSOLUTE TRUTH

All this relates to the essential fact that God is the ultimate and absolute truth. His is the truth that controls the universe and operates its systems. Everything else is false, irregular, and cannot be maintained: *That is because God, He is The Truth. And what they call to other than Him, it is falsehood.* **(22:62)**

This is an adequate explanation and a guarantee that truth and justice will inevitably triumph, while falsehood and aggression are certain to be defeated. It is the same guarantee that the laws of the universe will operate without fail. One of these laws and phenomena is that the truth will be victorious and falsehood will suffer a humiliating defeat. God is certainly far superior to any absolute ruler who seeks to demonstrate his power over the weak. The sign concludes

with this comment: *And that God, He is The Lofty, The Great.* **(22:62)** Therefore , He will not allow aggression to swell, or injustice to he everlasting.

Further natural phenomena are shown as permanent indicators of God's power: *Have you not considered that God caused water to descend from heaven? Then, in the morning, the earth becomes green. Truly, God is Subtle, Aware.* **(22:63)** We see this happening all the time: rain pours down from the skies and the earth becomes green within a very short period. *To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth. And, truly, God, He is The Sufficient, The Worthy of Praise.* **(22:64)** He is in need of nothing of what lives in the heavens and earth. Indeed all praise is due to Him for the favors He bestows on all His creatures.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**How to Build Your Argument** from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers

## Lesson 103(9). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Appropriateness

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

## Quranic Chapter 22: The Pilgrimage (al-Hajj) Signs 22:65-22:72

**Madinah:** *Have **you** not considered*
*that God caused to be subservient to you*
*what is in and on the earth?*
*And the boats run through the sea by His command.*
*And He holds back the heaven so that it not fall on the earth,*
*but by His permission.*
*Truly, to humanity God is Gentle, Compassionate.* (22:65)
*And it is He Who gave you life and, again, He will cause you to die*
*and, again, He will give you life.*
*Truly, the human being is ungrateful.* (22:66)
*For every community We assigned devotional acts*
*so that they be ones who perform rites.*
*So let them not bicker with **you** in the command.*
*And call **you** to **your** Lord.*
*Truly, **you** are on a guidance, that which is straight.* (22:67)
*And if they disputed with **you**, then, **you** say:*
*God is greater in knowledge about what you do.* (22:68)
*God will give judgment among you on the Day of Resurrection*

*about what you had been at variance in it.* (22:69)
*Have you not known that God knows what is in the heaven*
*and the earth? Truly, that is in a Book.*
*Truly, that is easy for God.* (22:70)
*And they worship other than God,*
*that for which He sent not down any authority*
*and of what they have no knowledge.*
*And there is no helper for the ones who are unjust.* (22:71)
*And when Our signs are recounted to them, clear portents,*
*you will recognize on the faces of those who were ungrateful,*
*that they are the ones who are rejected.*
*They are about to rush upon those who recount Our signs to them.*
*Say: Shall I tell you of worse than that?*
*God promised the fire to those who were ungrateful.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (22:72)

## COMMENTARY°

### MERCY WITHOUT LIMIT

Once more the chapter points out some of the aspects of God's power as seen in nature: **(22:65)** This draws people's attention to the earth they live on, which contains a wide variety of powers and wealth which God has made subservient to man.

*Have you not considered that God caused to be subservient to you what is in and on the earth?* **(22:65)** It is God who created the laws that allow ships to sail through the sea, and who gave the human being the necessary means to discover these laws and utilize them to his benefit. Had the nature of the sea, or the ships, or man's powers of understanding and learning been different, none of this could have happened.

*And He holds back the heaven so that it not fall on the earth, but by His permission. Truly, to humanity God is Gentle, Compassionate.* **(22:65)** It is He who created the universe and chose its appropriate system. It is He who has made its laws which ensure that celestial bodies remain far apart from each other.

God Almighty holds the celestial bodies so that they may not fall upon the earth' through the system He has devised for the universe. He keeps them from falling 'except by His leave.' This is a reference to a time when He may decide to stop this system for a purpose He, in His infinite wisdom, wishes to happen. The chapter completes its reference to aspects of God's power and the perfection of natural laws by speaking of the human soul. It talks of human existence, life and death: **(22:66)** The first life is a miracle renewed with every child born at every moment of the night and day. Its secret con-

tinues to fill man's mind with wonder and to leave a vast area for us to contemplate. Death is also a secret that the human being cannot fathom. It occurs within a brief moment, yet the gulf between the nature of life and that of death is vast indeed, leaving a similarly vast area for contemplation. Life after death is something that lies beyond our faculties of perception, but our present life provides ample evidence for it. This is a further area for contemplation.

### NO ROOM FOR ARGUMENT

Every community **(22:67-22:70)** has its own way of life, thought, behavior and beliefs, and these are subject to the consistent and accurate laws God has set to regulate people's nature, thinking, feelings and reactions to outside influences. A community that opens its hearts to the pointers to divine guidance and responds to relevant pointers in the universe and within the human soul finds its way to God. In this, it will benefit by the numerous signs pointing to His Oneness and encouraging compliance with His orders. By contrast, a community that shuts its mind to all this is in the wrong, sinking deeper into error.

God instructs the Prophet not to allow the ungrateful any chance to dispute with him over his mission, or the way of life he advocates. He must continue to implement it, paying no heed to anyone who wants to engage in argument and dispute. His is a straightforward way, as God Himself testifies: *Truly, you are on a guidance, that which is straight.* **(22:67)** This gives him all the reassurance he needs to follow divine guidance.

If the ungrateful try to dispute with him, he should cut short such arguments. It is no use wasting time and effort: *And if they disputed with you, then, you say: God is greater in knowledge about what you do.* **(22:68)** Argument can be useful with people whose hearts and minds are open to receive guidance, seeking knowledge and seriously searching for the right evidence. God will judge between all creeds and ways of life and their followers: *God will give judgment among you on the Day of Resurrection about what you had been at variance in it.* **(22:69)** He is the judge to whom no one can object, because on that day all argument is abandoned. Nor can there be any argument about the final judgement.

God makes His judgment on the basis of His perfect knowledge. He does not lose sight of any circumstances, and no motive or feeling is withheld from Him. He knows everything in the heavens and the earth, including people's intentions, motives, actions and reactions: *Have you not known that God knows what is in the heaven and the earth? Truly, that is in a Book.* **(22:70)** God's knowledge is not sub-

ject to any of the influences that erase things from memory or cause forgetfulness. His record is complete and perfect. Therefore the sign concludes with the statement: *Truly, that is easy for God.* **(22:70)**

Having made it clear to the Prophet that he must not allow the ungrateful a chance to dispute with him over his right way, the chapter shows how flawed and flimsy the way followed by the ungrateful is. It betrays total ignorance of the truth. They are deprived of God's help, and as such they have none to help them: **(22:71)**

The most singular thing is that while they worship false deities of which they have no knowledge, they refuse to listen to the voice of truth. They are hardened in their attitude, threatening to strike at those who recite God's revelations to them: **(22:72)**

Therefore, the Quran delivers a clear warning, pointing to the inevitable outcome: *Say: Shall I tell you of worse than that?* **(22:72)** What is worse than the evil they harbour within themselves, and the oppression they embark upon? *God promised the fire to those who were ungrateful.* **(22:72)** This is the right reply for the oppression they engage in. And the final comment is: *And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(22:72)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

## LESSON 103(10). CRITICAL THINKING INTELLECTUAL STANDARD

### WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT)

Sufficiently great or import to be worthy of attention.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 22: THE PILGRIMAGE (AL-HAJJ)

### SIGNS 22:73-22:78

**Madinah:** *O humanity! A parable was propounded,*
*so listen to it.*
*Truly, those whom you call to other than God*
*will never create a fly, even if they were gathered together for it.*
*And when the fly is to rob them of something,*
*they would never seek to deliver it from the fly.*
*Weak were the ones who are seekers*
*and the ones who are sought.* (22:73)
*They duly measured not the measure of God.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (22:74)
*God favors from the angels messengers and from humanity.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.* (22:75)
*He knows what is in advance of them, and what is behind them,*
*and to God all matters are returned.* (22:76)
*O those who believed! Bow down and prostrate yourselves,*
*and worship your Lord, and accomplish good*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.‡* (22:77)
*And struggle for God in a true struggling.*
*He elected you and made not for you*
*in your way of life any impediment.*
*It is the creed of your father Abraham.*
*He named you the ones who submit to God before*
*and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you*
*and you are witnesses over humanity.*
*So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms*
*and cleave firmly to God.*
*He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender*
*and how excellent a Helper!* (22:78)

### COMMENTARY°

#### POWERLESS MAN

The chapter now makes a powerful, universal declaration that all deities people associate with God, including the ones to which the wrongdoers appeal for help, are weak and powerless. Their weakness is shown in a bustling and captivating scene: Humanity. An

aphorism is set forth; hearken, then, to it. **(22:73)**

The chapter adds another dimension in describing their powerlessness: *And when the fly is to rob them of something, they would never seek to deliver it from the fly.* **(22:73)** False deities, be they idols or humans, cannot retrieve anything from a fly when it robs them of it. Flies can rob people of that which is precious indeed. At the same time, a fly carries agents of some very serious diseases, such as tuberculosis, typhoid, dysentery and conjunctivitis. It can deprive a person of his eyes or other organs, or indeed deprive him of his life. A weak and contemptible fly can rob a human being of what he can never retrieve.

This powerful image stating a clear aphorism concludes with a simple comment: *Weak were the ones who are seekers and the ones who are sought.* **(22:73)** This comment further emphasizes the effects generated by the sign as a whole.

At this moment when we realize how weak and contemptible these false deities are, the chapter denounces the ungrateful for their faulty concept of God, clearly stating God's power: *They duly measured not the measure of God. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(22:74)** How could they understand Him as He really is when they associate with Him such powerless deities that cannot even create a fly? What understanding of God have they, when they see His highly sophisticated creation and yet they consider as equal to Him beings that cannot create even a little fly?

The chapter then mentions that God Almighty chooses His angel messengers to deliver His revelations to prophets, and chooses His human messengers to address humanity. All this is done on the basis of immaculate knowledge and total ability: **(22:75-22:76)**

The choice of both angel and human messenger is made by the Almighty, and it was from the Almighty that Muhammad received the Quranic message. It was God who chose Muhammad to be His Messenger to humanity. How could he be compared to those who rely on deities that are both weak and contemptible? *Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing. He knows what is in advance of them, and what is behind them.* His knowledge is perfect, immaculate, complete. Nothing present or absent, near or distant escapes God's knowledge. *To God all matters are returned.* **(22:76)** He is the ultimate arbiter, who has power over all things.

### STRIVING FOR THE RIGHT CAUSE

Having exposed the absurdity of the idolaters' beliefs and the ignorance their worship rituals reflect, the chapter makes a final address to the Muslim community, urging it to be true to its beliefs and

to stick to the right way of life. **(22:77-22:78)**

*And struggle for God in a true struggling.* **(22:78)** This includes striving against one's enemies, laziness, evil and corruption. All these must be equally resisted. It is God who has assigned to you this massive responsibility and chosen you to fulfil it: "It is He who has chosen you." This choice adds to the seriousness of the responsibility, which means that it cannot be shrugged off or abandoned. Indeed it is an honor God has bestowed on the Muslim community for which it should be infinitely grateful.

Moreover, the assigned task is entwined with God's grace: *He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment.* **(22:78)** Indeed, the Quranic message, with all its duties, worship and laws always observes the human being's nature and abilities. It aims to satisfy human nature and release human abilities so that they are used constructively. Human nature must neither be suppressed nor left without control. Moreover, the Quranic way of life has a long history in human life, linking the past with the present. *It is the creed of your father Abraham.* **(22:78)** It is the system that has continued on earth since the time of Abraham, without any long gap that allows the divine faith to be totally distorted, as happened in some periods prior to Abraham's time.

God has given the name 'Muslim' to the community that believes in His Oneness, and this name remained the same whether in olden days or in the Quran: *He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation.* The Quranic message means surrendering oneself totally to God, attributing no share of Godhead to anyone else. Thus, the Muslim community has enjoyed the same system across successive generations, and with successive messages and messengers, up to the time of the Prophet Muhammad. It was then that the divine message was entrusted to the Muslim community. Thus, the past, present and future are interlinked as God wants *that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity.* **(22:78)**

The Prophet is, thus, a witness defining the way the Muslim community should follow, pointing out right and wrong, and the Muslim community fulfils the same task with regard to humanity at large. It occupies the position of trustee by virtue of the standards established by its laws, education and concepts relating to life and to the universe. Needless to say, the Muslim community cannot fulfil this role unless it implements God's message fully in life. When the Muslim community abandoned this role and deviated from the divine code of living, God removed it from this leadership, leaving it trailing well behind. It will continue to be in this humiliating position until

it resumes its role chosen for it by God.

To ensure such a return, it must be fully prepared for it. Therefore the order: **(22:78)** Prayer provides a link between the weak and mortal individual and the source of power, while zakat provides a strong link between members of the community, ensuring security for all. Holding fast to God is the strong tie that is never severed.

With such resources, the Muslim community can resume the role of human leadership for which God has chosen it. It will also be able to utilize the material resources people consider to be sources of strength. The Quran does not overlook these; on the contrary, it wants the Muslim community to be equipped with them, alongside the resources that are available only to believers who strive to enrich life with all that is good and right. The great advantage of the divine way of life is that it takes humanity by the hand along the way that raises it to the highest position of perfection achievable in this life.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**Stage 1**

- Develop a statement of the topic
- List what you understand, what you've been told and what opinions you hold about it
- Identify resources available for research
- Define timelines and due dates and how they affect the development of your study
- Print the list as your reference

**Stage 2**

- Define your destination, what you want to learn
- Clarify or verify with your teacher or an "expert" on your subject
- Develop your frame of reference, your starting point, by listing what you already know about the subject

What opinions and prejudices do you already have about this?
What have you been told, or read about, this topic?
What resources are available to you for research

When gathering information, keep an open mind
Look for chance resources that pop up!
Play the "reporter" and follow leads
If you don't seem to find what you need, ask librarians or your teacher.
How does your timeline and due dates affect your research?

**Stage 3**
Keep in mind that you need to follow a schedule.
- Work back from the due date and define stages of development, not just with this first phase, but in completing the whole project.

**Summary of Critical Thinking:**
1. Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
2. Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand them
3. Accept or reject the source values and conclusions based upon your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am frequently able to explain these signs to someone.
I know that if I cannot explain these sign to someone else, it shows that I have not learned them well enough.

## INTERLUDE: THE TREATY OF HUDAYBIYAH

The Messenger saw himself in a dream entering the Sacred Mosque in Makkah together with his Companions, some of them having shaven their heads and some with their hair cut short. The ungrateful in Makkah had prevented them entry into Makkah since their migration to Madinah. They did not even allow them entry during the four sacred months that all Arabs honored in the pre-Quranic period, laying down their arms and regarding fighting during these times as a great enormity. Entry into Makkah during these four months was free for all, in perfect safety. Even people involved in vengeance killings would meet in peace at this time. A man would come across the killer of his father or brother without raising a finger against him, or trying to prevent his entry into the Sacred Mosque. Nevertheless, the ungrateful in Makkah violated their well-established traditions, preventing the Messenger and the Muslims from entering Makkah throughout the six years that followed their migration to Madinah. Then the Messenger had this dream and reported it to his Companions who were delighted with it, realizing that a dream by a messenger would certainly come true.

The Messenger announced to his Companions and to the Arabian tribes around Madinah that he intended to visit Makkah to honor the Kabah and to worship there. He invited them all to join him. Most of the Arabian tribes which had not yet accepted the Quranic message were highly reluctant to join this peaceful expedition because they feared that the ungrateful were bound to resist the Muslims and prevent them from entering Makkah. If the ungrateful were determined to stop the Muslims, an armed conflict might erupt. Therefore, those Arabian tribes wanted to stay out of it. The Muslims, however, were very glad to join the Messenger, who marched at the head of some 1,400 of his followers.

The Messenger, however, marched on until he arrived at a place called Ghadlr al-Ashtat where Bishr ibn Sufyan gave him his report that the ungrateful were mobilizing and seeking the help of others to fight him and prevent him from entering Makkah. The Messenger was distressed at this report. He said: How ill-advised is the ungrateful! What would they lose if they were to leave me alone addressing my message to the rest of Arabia? If those Arabs were to kill me, the ungrateful would have what they wish. If I am to be the victorious, they must either accept the Quranic message without having suffered any losses, or fight me with their forces intact. What do they think? By God, I will continue to strive for the message God has given me until it is triumphant or I die.

Reflecting on the new situation after he had learnt that the un-

grateful were preparing for armed conflict, the Messenger decided to try to avoid such an eventuality. Therefore, he asked whether anyone in his camp was able to lead them through a route which took them away from the ungrateful, so that they could avoid an armed conflict with their advance force. A man from the tribe of Aslam came forward and led them through a very rough route which was very hard for the Muslims. Eventually, they found themselves in an open area which was easy to cross. The Messenger commanded them to take the right-hand route until they finally arrived at the plain of al-Hudaybiyah, to the south of Makkah, which was only a day's walk from the Holy City.

### A Declaration of Peace

Suddenly, the Messenger's she-camel sat down. People shouted at her to make her rise again, but she would not move. Some people suggested that she refused to go forward. The Messenger told them that such a refusal was not in her nature. He said: She is held back for the same reason which held back the elephant.

This was a reference to an incident which took place nearly sixty years earlier when Abraha, the ruler of the Yemen, was riding an elephant at the head of a large force, whose aim was to destroy the Kabah. Shortly before arriving in Makkah, the elephant sat still and would not move forward; it was ready to go back. Shortly afterwards, Abraha's army was attacked by birds which dropped stones at the army and destroyed it. The story is mentioned in a short Chapter of the Quran entitled, The Elephant: (105:1-105:5)

The Messenger then declared: By Him Who holds my soul in His hand, I shall respond favorably to any proposal the ungrateful puts to me today which helps establish good relations and guarantees respect to God's sanctuaries. He then ordered his Companions to encamp.

### Successive Emissaries

When the ungrateful realized that the Messenger had managed to evade their advance forces and that he was encamped at al-Hudaybiyah, they decided to send a messenger to him. They were also aware that should they succeed in stopping Muhammad from entering Makkah, when he had come with no purpose other than to visit the Sacred Mosque, their action would not go unquestioned by the other Arabs. Their prestige was derived from the fact that they were custodians of the Sacred House and that they prevented no one from worshipping there. The first emissary they sent was Budayl ibn Waraqa of the tribe of Khuzaah, who went with a group of his fellow

tribesmen. The tribe of Khuzaah was always sympathetic towards the Messenger. Some of its men had embraced the Quranic message, but even those who had not were far from hostile to its message. Budayl spoke to the Messenger and told him that the ungrateful were determined to prevent him from entering Makkah. The Messenger assured him that he had no intention of fighting anyone. He wanted only to visit the Kabah and to demonstrate the Muslims' recognition of its sanctity. The Messenger s comment on the ungrateful's attitude was given in these words: The ungrateful are now in such a state that they can think only of war. I am prepared to agree a truce with them, if they so desire. I ask them only to leave me alone to speak to people. If I am successful and other people follow me, then the choice is theirs to do likewise. If they refuse, they will have preserved their strength. If they are determined to stop me, I swear by God that I will fight them over this cause of mine until I die, and even then they cannot prevent what God wills.

Budayl went back to the ungrateful and said to them: We have come to you after seeing this man and hearing what he says. Would you like to hear what he told us? Some of them shouted: We do not wish to hear anything he says. Some wiser people requested him to report what he had heard. When he finished his report, he pleaded with them, saying that they were rash in their attitude because Muhammad did not intend to fight them. He wanted only to visit the Kabah.

The ungrateful leaders were not persuaded to moderate their attitude. They said: Even if he does not want to fight, he will never be allowed to enter Makkah against our will. No one shall say that we allowed that to happen.

The ungrateful then sent Mikraz ibn Hafs to speak to the Messenger, and he came back with the same message as Budayl. The third envoy the ungrateful sent was al-Hulays ibn Alqamah, the leader of the Habshi tribe. When the Messenger saw him coming from a distance, he said to his Companions: This is a man who belongs to a religious community. Drive the sacrificial animals towards him so that he may see them. When al-Hulays saw the sacrificial animals, he returned to the ungrateful without speaking to the Messenger, because he realized that there should have been no cause for contention. He advised the ungrateful to leave Muhammad alone and allow him to worship at the Kabah. They spoke harshly to him and told him to leave them alone. Al-Hulays was angered by the attitude of the ungrateful, but they were not to be persuaded by any argument.

## THE FOURTH ENVOY

Having rejected the advice of all three envoys to allow Muhammad to enter Makkah and worship at the Kabah, the ungrateful decided to send a fourth emissary. None of the existing reports throws any light on the reasons which made the ungrateful feel that sending another envoy to speak to the Messenger would bring about any change in the situation. It is not known what the ungrateful hoped to achieve by sending these envoys when it was not prepared to listen to their advice. Perhaps it was all a mark of the ungrateful's confusion. On the other hand, it may have been an exercise in self-justification. The ungrateful might have wanted to be able to say that they tried all they could to reach accommodation with Muhammad. Be that as it may, the man the ungrateful chose this time was Urwah ibn Masud, a leader of the tribe of Thaqif, which lived in the town of Taif.

Urwah, however, wanted first to make sure that on his return he would not receive the same harsh treatment as the other envoys the ungrateful sent, should he come back with advice the ungrateful might not like. He, therefore, addressed the people of the ungrateful: I have noted what sort of abuse you have poured on the heads of those you have sent to Muhammad. You know that to me you are parents and that I am your son. When I heard of your trouble, I gathered those of my people who obeyed my orders and have come to give you support. The ungrateful answered: This is certainly true, and we have no doubts about you. When he sat down to speak to the Messenger, he said:

Muhammad, I have left your people mobilizing their forces. They are swearing that they will never let you reach the Sacred House until you have overwhelmed them. Should there be a fight between you and them, you are faced with one of two eventualities: either you conquer your own people—and we have never heard of any man who has conquered his own people or your soldiers will let you down. Have you gathered this mob to smash your own people? It is the ungrateful you are fighting, and the ungrateful have mobilized even their women and children, and are now in a very determined mood, pledging to God that you will never enter their city. My feeling is that you will be in a very difficult situation tomorrow, when this mob let you down. I certainly recognize no one among them and cannot see that any one of them comes from a respectable background.

Urwah tried his best to weaken the Messenger's determination to enter Makkah, raising before him the prospect of defeat and counselling him against causing a military conflict. The Messenger assured him that he wanted nothing more than to pay a visit to the

Kabah in the same way as anyone else could visit it to worship, and was not prevented from so doing. After all, the Kabah did not belong to the ungrateful; they were only its custodians and as such they had no right to prevent anyone from worshipping there.

Urwah did not fail to notice the Muslims' respect for the Messenger. When he went back to the ungrateful he advised them: People of the ungrateful, I have seen the Khosroe, the Persian Emperor, and the Caesar of the Byzantine Empire and Negus of Abyssinia, in their respective kingdoms. I swear that I have never seen a king enjoying among his people a similar position to that of Muhammad among his Companions. They do not fix their eyes when they look at him; they do not raise their voices when they speak to him. He does not need to give more than a signal to any one of them for that man to do what he is bid. I have looked at those people and I have seen that they do not care what may happen to them if they are able to protect their master. Make up your minds. He has made a proposal to you and I counsel you to conclude a peace agreement with him, and to accept his offer. I am giving you my sincere advice and I certainly fear that you will not be able to overcome him.

The ungrateful, however did not like Urwah's opinion and were not willing to consider the idea of peace. Urwah, therefore, left them with his people and returned to Taif.

Thus, every envoy the ungrateful sent returned and counseled them to moderate their attitude and allow the Muslims to offer their worship at the Kabah. None, however, was able to persuade the ungrateful that its hard-line did not serve its own interest. Motivated by pride and anger, the ungrateful was determined not to give in, whatever the cost.

The Muslims, on the other hand, did not wish to overrun Makkah. That course would result in more bloodshed and a fight against their own people. They stayed calm, hoping that some solution to the problem could still be found.

One report suggests that the ungrateful sent a small force of 40 or 50 men, giving them orders to go around the Muslims' camp and try to take one of the Messenger's Companions prisoner. As it turned out, they were taken prisoner themselves and were brought before the Messenger. He, however, pardoned them and set them free. God mentions in the Quran that He has bestowed calmness on His Messenger and the believers and caused them to abide by the rules of faith and piety. That is the attitude which best becomes them.

### THE MESSENGER'S ENVOY

Considering the situation and the fact that he had received four

emissaries from the ungrateful without any sign that the ungrateful were mellowing their opposition to the Muslims' entry to Makkah, the Messenger thought it might be useful to bring some pressure to bear on the ungrateful. He therefore decided to send them an envoy to assure them that his objective was only to worship at the Kabah, not to pick a fight with anyone. The envoy was Kharrash ibn Umayyah of the tribe of Khuzaah. As soon as Kharrash arrived in Makkah, however, his camel was wounded by the ungrateful people, who also wanted to kill him. He was saved by the Habshi tribe, whose chief al-Hulays was one of the ungrateful's envoys to the Messenger. The treatment Kharrash received was against the age-honored traditions of diplomacy, which gave immunity to Messengers and envoys. The Messenger, however, did not wish to allow this incident to be an obstacle in his attempt to reach a peaceful solution to the problem. He therefore overlooked the matter and concentrated on maintaining contact with the ungrateful. He thought that sending a more prominent figure from among his Companions might be more useful.

The Messenger first thought of Umar ibn al-Khattab as a suitable messenger. Umar, however, pointed out that his own clan, the Adyy, no longer had any influence in Makkah. No one would protect him should he come to any harm. He suggested that Uthman ibn Affan of the Umayyad branch of the ungrateful was better placed to act as the Messenger's ambassador.

Despite the fact that Uthman's clan was very influential in Makkah, he had to go under the protection of his own cousin, Aban ibn Said ibn al-Aas. Enjoying that protection, he was able to deliver his message, speak to the ungrateful elders and explain to them that the Muslims had come for the purpose of worship only and had no other intention. It was better for the ungrateful, Uthman argued, that they should be seen by the Arabs as faithful to their charge as custodians of the Sacred House. The ungrateful, however, were adamant in their hard-line attitude. The only concession Uthman could get from the ungrateful was that they allowed him to do the circumambulation (*tawaf*) should he so desire. He made it clear to them that under the circumstances, he would not do so until the Messenger had done his own circumambulation.

Uthman's discussions with the ungrateful leaders were prolonged and he was in Makkah for three days. Moreover, he was apparently able to contact some people from among the ungrateful who had adopted the Quranic message and remained in Makkah, keeping the fact of their conversion a secret. Apparently there were quite a few of these people, who yearned for the day when they would be

able to declare their stand and enjoy freedom of faith. Uthman carried a message from the Messenger to them telling them that victory would be coming soon. They were greatly encouraged by that message and requested Uthman to give the Messenger their respects and to tell him, on their behalf, that they believed that God, Who had enabled him to encamp at al-Hudaybiyah, was able to open the gates of Makkah for him.

Some reports suggest that Uthman was arrested by the ungrateful when it discovered that he had made these contacts with the still-in-Makkah Muslims. Indeed, a rumor began to spread that Uthman was killed. It did not take long before this rumor was heard in the Muslim camp. Uthman's prolonged absence could only lend credence to that rumor. Receiving no indication to the contrary, the Messenger concluded that the report of Uthman's death was correct. The treatment which was meted out to his first envoy, Kharrash ibn Umayyah, served as supporting evidence. He felt that the situation had reached a stage where tolerance could only be counter-productive.

### A Pledge to Fight and Die

Deeply hurt and very sad, the Messenger felt that by killing Uth man, his Companion and envoy, the ungrateful had closed the door on all efforts which aimed at reaching a peaceful settlement. The other alternative was the one which he had tried hard to avoid: namely, war. He called on his Companions to give him a pledge to fight the ungrateful to the bitter end. He was standing underneath a tree when he requested that pledge, and his Companions rushed to give him what he asked of them. Every one of them pledged that he would fight and never flee from battle even if that meant his own death. The Messenger was pleased with his Companions' responses. He also made a pledge on behalf of Uthman: Uthman is on a mission given him by God and His Messenger. I, therefore, make a pledge on his behalf. He clasped his hands together and said: This is for Uthman. In comment on this pledge, the Quran says: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they took the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He sent forth the tranquility on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. And they will take much gain. And god has been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:18-48:19)**

That pledge is known in history books as Bayat al-Ridwan, or the pledge earning God's pleasure, in view of the clear statement that God was pleased with those who took part in it. Indeed, the pledge warmed the Messenger's heart, since it was yet another demonstra-

tion that his Companions were always prepared to render whatever sacrifice they were called upon to make in defense of the cause of the message.

Those Companions of the Messenger realized that numerically the ungrateful were far superior to them. Besides, when they started their journey, they did not bring their war equipment with them. War was completely absent from their minds. None of them wore body armour or carried it with him. They carried only the minimum armament which was absolutely necessary for travelling in the desert of Arabia: their swords in their sheaths. Their pledge meant, in effect, that they were determined to face the far superior strength of the ungrateful, on the ungrateful's own ground with swords only, leaving no room for withdrawal or escape. They were fully aware of what they had pledged to do. When they were subsequently asked about the terms of their pledge and what it entailed, their answer was: Death. Such a pledge, readily given and sincerely meant, would definitely earn God's pleasure, as those people had definitely earned it. Jabir ibn Abd Allah, a Companion of the Messenger who took part in that pledge, said: The Messenger told us on the day of al-Hudaybiyah: You are the best people on earth.

Shortly after the pledge was made, Uthman arrived to give the Messenger an account of his mission. His arrival took the heat off the situation. The Messenger was very pleased to see him alive but was not happy to learn of the ungrateful's adamant attitude. He reflected on the situation, trying to assess the choices open to him.

The ungrateful, on the other hand, heard of the pledge given by the Muslims to the Messenger. Their chiefs were engaged in high level consultations. They realized that the Muslims'pledge meant that their determination to achieve their purpose was not in doubt. Past experience suggested that should the two sides be engaged in a military conflict, the outcome might very well be a victory for the Muslims, despite their relatively small numbers and poor equipment. That the Muslims could always be relied upon to fight hard and well and not to weaken in the face of adversity was something not to be doubted. Now that they had given the Messenger such a clear commitment to fight to the bitter end, the Muslims would not just go away. Moreover, the ungrateful might not have been fully convinced that they acted within their rights when they tried to prevent the Muslims from worshipping at the Kabah. Their motives were nothing more than pride of position and conceit. Therefore, the ungrateful realized that they must think seriously of the consequences, especially if the military conflict went against them.

## A DELEGATION FOR PEACE

Some wiser men among the ungrateful must have suggested that achieving a peaceful settlement might preserve the ungrateful's dignity better than war, even if the war ended in its favor. The views of its earlier envoys—particularly those of al-Hulays of the Habshl tribe and Urwah ibn Masud of the Thaqlf—began to appear highly valid. Moreover, should the ungrateful push matters to the point of flare-up, their action might mean a fight near the Sacred House and in the sacred month. This would, in effect, be setting a precedent which was certain to do more harm than good to the ungrateful. Therefore, the arguments for moderation suddenly began to appear much weightier. A delegation headed by Suhayl ibn Amr was, therefore, dispatched to negotiate the terms of a peace settlement with the Messenger,

The Messenger received Suhayl ibn Amr and his delegation well. He instructed his Companions to show their sacrificial animals and to raise their voices with phrases expressing the fact that they had come only in response to God's call to honor the Sacred House. The talks between the two sides were not easy. Despite the fact that the Messenger was keen to achieve a peace settlement, the negotiations had to deal with several issues of substance. The topics included: the Messenger's visit to the Sacred House; the ungrateful's determination not to seem to have given in to force; the possibility of agreeing a long term truce between the two sides, putting an end to their frequent military clashes; the sort of relations which should exist between the two sides; and the freedom of each side to make political moves on the wider horizon of the whole of Arabia.

There was, however, no reason to prolong the discussions. The Messenger accepted all the ungrateful's conditions readily. It was Suhayl ibn Amr who took a long time in his presentation of each of those conditions and what each of them entailed. Indeed, the ungrateful's side were surprised that all their conditions were accepted by the Messenger without too much trouble. It was necessary, however, to write the agreement down and to have it signed by representatives of both sides.

## UNEASE IN THE MUSLIM CAMP

The Messenger's attitude caused a stir in the Muslim camp. They were not used to seeing the Messenger taking such a very soft attitude. It was also surprising for the ungrateful negotiators themselves. Not only did the Messenger accept all the terms the ungrateful stipulated, he did not consult his Companions in the matter, contrary to his normal practice. Moreover, the terms of the peace agreement

were extremely surprising to the Muslims, because they tended to cast the Muslim side as much weaker than the ungrateful. To the Muslims, accepting such terms was neither useful nor necessary. Some of them could not hide their dissatisfaction. This is epitomized by the attitude of Umar ibn al-Khattab. When the terms of the peace agreement were finalized and were about to be written down, Umar came to Abu Bakr and said: Abu Bakr, is he not God's Messenger? Abu Bakr answered in the affirmative. Umar again asked: Are we not the Muslims? When Abu Bakr gave the same answer, Umar went on: Are they not the idolaters? Abu Bakr again answered: Yes. Umar then asked him: Why then should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith? Abu Bakr answered with a piece of advice, saying to his questioner: Follow him whatever he does, Umar. I believe that he is God's Messenger. But Umar was still perturbed and said: And I too believe that he is God's Messenger.

Umar's argument was that since what separated the two sides was really a single issue—right against wrong, faith against lack of faith—those who were on the side of right and truth must not give in to those who championed the cause of wrong and falsehood. The believers must never accept any sort of humiliation when it came to matters relating to faith. Indeed, they should always show pride in their religion. Therefore, Umar was not to be deterred. He went to the Messenger and put to him the same questions: Are you not God's Messenger? Are we not the Muslims? Are they not the idolaters? To all these questions, the Messenger answered in the affirmative. The final question Umar put was again the same: Why, then, should we accept humiliation in matters of our faith?

The Messenger's answer provided the clue to his attitude: I am God's servant and Messenger. I shall not disobey Him and He will never abandon me. The Messenger was indeed following divine orders which he must have received at that time.

The Messenger then called in Ali ibn Abi Talib to write down the peace agreement so that it might be signed by both sides. Again, Suhayl ibn Amr showed maximum rigidity, while the Messenger showed complete flexibility.

The Messenger told Ali to write: In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate Suhayl interrupted: I do not know this. Write down: In your name, Our Lord. The Messenger told Ali to write the phrase Suhayl proposed. He continued with his dictation: These are the terms of the peace agreement negotiated between Muhammad, God's Messenger, and Suhayl ibn Amr. Again, Suhayl interrupted: Had I accepted that you are God's Messenger, I would not have fought you. You have to write down your name and your

father's name. The Messenger accepted Suhayi's point and revised his dictation, telling Ali to write: These are the terms of the peace agreed by Muhammad ibn Abd Allah and Suhayl ibn Amr.

### THE TERMS OF THE PLEDGE

The Agreement was completed in seven parts, a summary of which is:

1. The ungrateful and Muslims agree not to fight any war against each other for a period of ten years.

2. Whenever anyone flees from Makkah without permission and joins the Muslims, the Messenger must return that person to the ungrateful, but if a Muslim returns to the ungrateful it is not necessary for the ungrateful to return that person.

3. Both the ungrateful and the Muslims are free to form agreements with any tribe they so choose.

4. Muhammad and his followers will return this year from this point to Madinah. Next year they may make a pilgrimage to God's House conditional upon the fact that they remain for not more than three days in Makkah and that they only carry the arms of a traveler.

5. Muslims in Makkah are free to perform their religious duties and no one has the right to belittle them or mock them or oblige them to put aside their beliefs.

6. Both parties agree to respect the property of the other.

7. The property and life of Muslims who enter Makkah from Madinah are to be respected.

### A HARD TEST OF MUSLIM INTENTIONS

These were the terms of the peace agreement. When they were written down, witnesses from both sides were asked to sign the document. At that moment, something happened to test the patience of the believers and to give them another opportunity to prove the strength of their faith. A man from Makkah arrived in handcuffs and with his legs in chains. He was being kept prisoner there because he was a Muslim. This man was none other than Suhayl's own son, Abu Jandal. It was his father who imprisoned him and fastened his shackles. Nevertheless, he had been able to escape and to take an unfamiliar route through the mountains surrounding Makkah until he arrived at al-Hudaybiyah. When the Muslims saw him, they were very glad that he had escaped and gave him a fine reception.

While the peace agreement was being written down, Suhayl was too busy to notice anything. When it was finished, Suhayl looked up and saw his son among the Muslims. He went up to him, hit him in the face and took him by the collar. Abu Jandal cried aloud: My fel-

low Muslims, am I to be returned to the ungrateful to try to turn me away from my faith? Those words were very painful to the Muslims, some of whom started to cry.

Suhayl ibn Amr, however, was unmoved. He said to God's Messenger: This is the first person whose case I take up. You must return him to me. The Messenger referred to the fact that Abu Jandal arrived before the agreement was completed: We have not finished drawing up the document yet. Suhayl said: Then I have not agreed any terms with you whatsoever. The Messenger pleaded: Then allow me him.

Suhayl said that he would not. Mikraz, another member of the ungrateful delegation, said that they should allow Muhammad to have Abu Jandal. The father was adamant and refused all appeals to let his son join the Muslims. He went even further and began to hit his son with a thorny branch of a tree. The Messenger again pleaded with him to let his son go, or at least not to torture him. But Suhayl would accept nothing. Some of Suhayl's friends, however, extended their protection to Abu Jandal and his father stopped hitting him. The Messenger explained to Abu Jandal his inability to help him, speaking to him in a loud voice so that he could hear: Abu Jandal, be patient and endure your situation for God's sake. He will certainly provide for you and those who are suffering with you a way out of your hardship. We have made a peace agreement with those people, giving them a pledge by God that we will be faithful to the terms of our agreement. We shall not violate our pledges."

### KILL YOUR FATHER

Umar ibn al-Khattab was again outraged by the situation. He could not understand why the Muslims should accept such humiliating terms or stand idle when a brother of theirs was subjected to harsh treatment for no reason other than the fact that he believed in God and His Messenger. As Abu Jandal was being led away, Umar went up to him and walked by his side. He spoke to him: Be patient, Abu Jandal. These people are ungrateful. They are worthless. The blood of anyone of them is no more precious than the blood of a dog.

As he was walking by Abu Jandal's side and talking to him, he continued to move the handle of his sword towards Abu Jandal, hoping that Abu Jandal would take Umar's sword and kill his father. Abu Jandal either did not wish to kill his father or did not understand or notice Umar's gesture. He submitted to his fortune until God would help him get his release. He was led away in his shackles and chains. As the Muslims looked at him, their hearts were full of agony because they were unable to help him.

When the document detailing the peace terms was written down,

the Messenger asked a number of his Companions to witness the agreement, in addition to witnesses from the ungrateful side.

This peace was supposed to last for ten years. Very few Muslims were able to bring themselves to accept it without experiencing a feeling of unease. What added to their bitterness was the fact that the terms of the agreement meant that they had to go back home without being able to fulfill their purpose of worshipping at the Kabah. It should be remembered that the Messenger and his Companions were in sacred dress (*ihram*) the state of consecration, having left Madinah in order to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage or Visitation (*umra*). They were first prevented from entering Makkah by the declared intention of the ungrateful to use force to stop them. Now they were prevented by the terms of the agreement which they signed with the ungrateful. They were, in effect, in the position of a person who sets out from home to do his Lesser Pilgrimage but is unable to reach his destination owing to some reason beyond his control. God declares in the Quran that such a person can release himself from the sacred dress by slaughtering a sheep or some other sacrificial animal at the point where he cannot continue his journey.

### CANCELLATION OF INTENDED WORSHIP

The Messenger said to his Companions: Slaughter your animals and shave and release yourselves from the sacred dress. No one showed any sign of willingness to comply with this order. The Messenger repeated his command three times and still no one was willing to do as he was told. The Messenger was very angry indeed. He went into his tent where Umm Salamah, his wife who accompanied him on this expedition, was waiting. She immediately noticed how angry he was. She asked him the reason why and he answered: The Muslims are ruining themselves. I have given them a command and they have not obeyed. He explained to her how his Companions received his orders with indifference and how not one of them was willing to obey.

She tried to pacify him: Messenger of God, do not blame them. They have been under great pressure because of all the trouble you have taken to achieve this peace settlement and because they now realize that they have to take the long way home without achieving their purpose. She then gave him a very sound piece of advice: she told him to go out and slaughter his own sacrificial animals and shave, without speaking to any one of them. The Messenger acted on his wife's advice and went out and slaughtered his camels. He then called someone to shave his head. When his Companions witnessed what he did, they rushed to do likewise. Some of them helped

others to shave and they were extremely unhappy with themselves for not responding to the Messengers orders in the first place.

Not all of the Muslims at al-Hudaybiyah shaved their heads: some of them just cut their hair. The Messenger said: May God have mercy on those who have shaved. Some of his Companions said: Messenger of God, what about those who have cut their hair? He answered by repeating the same prayer: May God have mercy on those who have shaved. The same question about those who had cut their hair was put to him, but he answered by repeating the same prayer a third time. Once more, he was asked about the other group and the Messenger included them in his prayers, saying: And those who have cut their hair. When he was asked the reason for repeating his prayers for mercy to the shavers three times before he included the other group, he answered: They have entertained no doubt.

The Messenger then began his journey home. On the way back to Madinah, the Messenger received new revelations—the sign (48:1) was revealed: *Truly We have given victory to you, a clear victory*. One of the Companions who had memorized the Quran: We were with the Messenger at al-Hudaybiyah. When we were on the way back, we noticed that people were agitating their camels. People began to ask what was going on. They learned that the Messenger received a new revelation. We approached him feeling very apprehensive. We saw the Messenger on his camel at Kira al-Ghamim. When people assembled, he recited the first sign. One of his Companions asked him: Is it a victory, Messenger of God? He replied: Yes indeed. By Him who holds my soul in His hand, it is a clear victory.

It was also a great victory on the ground. The Muslim community no longer faced danger from the ungrateful. Therefore, the Messenger was now free to address the problem represented by the Jews in Arabia. After the removal of the Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa, al-Nadir and Qurayzah from Madinah, following their repeated violations of their friendship agreement with the Muslim community, the Jewish threat came from Khaybar and its fortresses. From there, the Jews could easily make the road to Syria unsafe. Khaybar and all its fortresses fell to the Muslims a short while later, and the Muslims were able to take great war gains which the Messenger divided exclusively among those who accompanied him at al-Hudaybiyah. The only exception was that the Messenger included with them those who came back from Abyssinia and joined him at Khaybar when the battle was over. He considered these to have been on an expedition advocating the Quranic message throughout their fifteen years stay in Abyssinia.

Al-Hudaybiyah Treaty was a decisive victory in the confrontation between the Muslims in Madinah and the ungrateful in Makkah, supported by all the ungrateful in Arabia. It has been said: Undoubtedly, this peace agreement described in the Quran as a glorious victory amply deserves this description. Indeed it is one of the most decisive and greatest events during the Messenger's lifetime and in history generally, consolidating the Muslim state. For the first time the ungrateful recognized the Messenger and the Muslim state, treating them on an equal footing. It was keen to avoid military confrontation, preferring to peacefully turn them away from their purpose of entering Makkah. Twice before, the ungrateful tried to invade Madinah, and the second of these attempts took place only one year earlier. At the time, the ungrateful and other confederate tribes raised a great force avowing to exterminate the Quranic message and the Muslims. When the ungrateful launched this attack, the Muslims in Madinah went through an extremely hard time as, numerically, they were no match for the attacking forces. The new development leading to the signing of the peace treaty had a marked effect on the Arabs; up until then they had looked upon the ungrateful as the master in Arabia and were strongly influenced by its opposition to the Quranic message. Indeed, when the Messenger embarked on his trip to Makkah, the desert Arabs believed that he would not return safely. The hypocrites in Madinah were of similar views. Taking all this into consideration, we realize the great importance of this victory. The Messenger marched to Makkah when the ungrateful flagrantly breached the peace treaty. Makkah fell to the Quranic message with very little fighting.

## Lesson 104(1). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Numerous or Multiple Viewpoints

Observation and information are the basis for sound conclusions. You learn to distinguish between what you observe from the Quranic signs and what you conclude. You delve into the facts given in the signs to find the implications as well as the concepts. You separate guessing from clear conclusions. You normally have a tendency to make inferences that reinforce your own egocentric or sociocentric world views. You learn to evaluate inferences that are made when your own desires are involved from inferences that develop sound conclusions. You should know that every interpretation that is made is based on inference and that you interpret every situation in which you find yourselves.

The Middle Community, Moderation (*ummatan wasatan*, *wasatiyyah*): The Quranic conception of the Middle Community visualizes a certain degree of parity between dialogic and co-related concepts such as reason and revelation, matter and spirit, rights and duties, individualism and society, compulsion and voluntarism, text and *ijtihad*, ideal and reality, continuity and change, and between the past realities and future prospects. How does *wasatiyyah* manifest itself and achieve its desire purposes of equilibrium and moderation?

## Quranic Chapter 63: The Hypocrites (al-Munafiqun)

### Signs 63:1-63:8

**Madinah:** *When the ones who are hypocrites drew near* ***you****.*
*They said: We bear witness that* ***you*** *are*
*truly, the Messenger of God.*
*And God knows that* ***you*** *are, truly, His Messenger*
*and God bears witness*
*that the ones who are hypocrites are ones who lie.* (63:1)
*They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext.*
*Then, they barred from the way of God.*
*Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing!* (63:2)
*That is because they believed and, again, disbelieved,*
*so a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* (63:3)
*When* ***you*** *have seen them, their physiques impress* ***you****.*
*And when they speak,* ***you*** *have heard their saying.*
*It is as if they had been propped up timber.*
*They assume that every Cry is against them.*
*They are the enemy so beware of them.*
*God took the offensive. How they are misled!* (63:4)
*And when it was said to them: Approach now.*
*The Messenger of God asks forgiveness for you.*

*They twist their heads and **you** had seen them dissuading*
*while they are ones who grow arrogant.* (63:5)
*It is the same to them whether **you** had asked for forgiveness*
*for them or **you** had not asked for forgiveness for them.*
*God will never forgive them.*
*Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (63:6)
*They, those who say: Spend not on such ones*
*who are with the Messenger of God until they break away.*
*And to God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth*
*but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)
*They say: If we returned to the city, certainly,*
*would drive out the more mighty,*
*the ones humble spirited from it.*
*Yet to God belongs the great glory*
*and to His Messenger and to the ones who believe.*
*But the ones who are hypocrites know not.* (63:8)

## COMMENTARY°

Although the title *The Hypocrites*, indicates this Chapter's subject matter, it is nonetheless not the only one that mentions hypocrisy and that describes the hypocrites' wicked scheming. Indeed, hardly any of the Chapters revealed in Madinah is without an express or implied reference to hypocrisy. However, the present Chapter is dedi cated, almost entirely, to speaking about the hypocrites, referring to particular events and statements they made. The Chapter launches a strong attack against the hypocrites: their manners, lies, intrigue and wicked plots. It exposes their true feelings of hatred towards the Muslims, as also their cowardice and evil nature.

A warning is given at the end to the believers not to allow any of the characteristics of hypocrisy to creep near them. The first element of hypocrisy is not to be totally dedicated to God's cause, and to be instead preoccupied with money, property and children. Hypocrisy also entails slackening when invited to contribute financially to God's cause until a day comes when no such donation will be of any use.

The hypocrisy of the ungrateful accelerated when the Messenger moved to Madinah and continued to so grow until virtually the end of his blessed life. Although evidence of such traits was almost uninterrupted, hypocrisy nonetheless acquired different aspects and variously resorted to different tactics. Inevitably, such behavior had a strong bearing on the events of the period, taking up much of the Muslim community's efforts, time and energy. Indeed, hypocrisy is

frequently mentioned in the Quran thereby indicating how prevalent it had become.

There were obvious reasons for the phenomenon of hypocrisy to appear in Madinah. The early Muslims in Makkah were neither strong enough nor influential enough to make a group of people fear them or try to appease them. Indeed, the people of Makkah, and its leaders and notables in particular, opposed the Prophet in a very open manner, inflicting much harm on the Muslims, and resorted to any measure within their means to check the new religions advance In fact, they commanded much power. Because of this persecution the Muslims were subjected to some had to migrate to Abyssinia, and thereafter to Madinah. In fact, some of them were subjected to such unbearable pressure that they had to renounce their faith: this as a result of either torture or the lure of temptation. So extreme did this become that a few even died under torture.

In Madinah, the situation was markedly different. Prior to his migration there, the Prophet was able to recruit a number of strong and influential followers from the two tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj. He migrated only after having made sure of the favorable situation there. Indeed, there was hardly an Arab house in Madinah without its followers of the Quranic message in the family. There were no doubt many who rejected the Quranic message, either because they chose not to listen to its message or because they were full of hostility realizing that the Prophet's arrival in Madinah threatened their position of leadership and influence. They realized, however, that they could not take an openly hostile attitude to the Prophet and his Emigrant and Helper followers.

Moreover, tribal affiliation was an important factor preventing such open hostility. Indeed, the broad majority of their own tribes, the Aws and the Khazraj, were now Muslim, giving sincere and devoted support to the Prophet. They were good Muslims who looked at the Prophet as their own supreme commander, and the guide they had to follow. Therefore, the ones who still entertained thoughts of idolatry and harbored rancor in their hearts, prompting them to seek to undermine the Quranic message, felt that their only option was to pretend to be Muslim, appearing to fulfill their Quranic duties, declaring their continued loyalty to their tribes, while at the same time resorting to plots and intrigue. At times, however, their opposition did smack of hypocrisy, this usually when the Muslims faced some tough crisis, and here the pretenders counseled caution, claiming that it was the only option that served Muslim interests. Needless to say, they did not acknowledge that they were in fact ungrateful. Nonetheless, their true attitude of hypocrisy did not go unnoticed by the

Prophet and his Companions. Moreover, their stand at times of crises, counselling a policy of weakness, hardened them further in their hypocrisy and unbelief. Quranic revelations time after time exposed and denounced their schemes, alerting the Prophet and the believers to the need to be very cautious in dealing with them.

The hypocrites' attitude and schemes had, according to the import of Quranic revelations, a far-reaching effect. We feel that there was a determined struggle, reminiscent of that between the Prophet and the Makkan elders, but with a reversal in its outcome. Within a short period, the Prophet strengthened his position in Madinah and his influence increased. The Quranic message was spreading and consolidating its power base. The hypocrites were neither a solid group nor a clearly identified entity. As the Quranic message was on the ascendancy, they grew weaker and thus their influence diminished.

To appreciate the threat posed by the hypocrites, particularly in the early period of the Quranic message in Madinah, we need to remember however that they could still call on tribal loyalties, which remained strong among the Arabs. Besides, they had not at this juncture exposed themselves. Nor had the Quranic message as yet consolidated its influence on its new followers. Moreover, the Prophet was surrounded by idolaters on all fronts. The people of Makkah continued to enjoy a position of great influence among the Arabs, and they were on the lookout for any chance to level a crushing defeat on the still fledgling Muslim State.

### UGLY HYPOCRISY

The Chapter begins **(63:1-63:11)** with a description of the hypocrites' attempt to disguise the truth of their ingratitude. They declare themselves Muslim and testify that the Prophet is God's Messenger. They swear by God so as to convince the Muslims, while they themselves know that they are lying. Their oaths are merely a shield behind which they hope to hide their true reality and deceive the Muslims: **(63:1-63:2)**

They would go to the Prophet and state that they bore witness that he was God's Messenger, but theirs was only a verbal testimony lacking all conviction. They were merely engaging in deception, hoping to hide their truth from the Muslim community and so protect themselves. Therefore, God states that they were lying while making dear the truth of His message to the Prophet Muhammad: *And God knows that you are, truly, His Messenger and God bears witness that the ones who are hypocrites are ones who lie.* **(63:1)**

The phraseology here is both precise and precautionary. We note

how the sign begins by confirming the truth of the Prophet s message before it states that the hypocrites''oaths were false. Without taking such care in its wording, the sign could suggest that denunciation of the hypocrites as liars applies to the subject matter of their statement, namely the Prophet's message. The sign intends no such thing. What it aims to do is to state the truth, making it clear that they did not really believe that the Prophet's message was true. In other words, they are not sincere in their statement.

*They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext.* **(63:2)** This short statement suggests that they used to swear an oath every time they feared exposure, or whenever one of their schemes was uncovered, or some of what they said about Muslims was reported. They hoped that such oaths would protect them from the consequences of their exposure. Thus they used their false faith as a shield to hide their reality and allow them a chance to go on with their plots and schemes against the Muslim community. Thus, *then, they barred from the way of God.* They kept themselves and others away from God's path, using their false oaths for that end. *Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing!* **(63:2)** Could there be anything worse than lying to mislead and deceive others?

The Chapter explains the reasons behind their behavior, making it clear that they knowingly reverted to ingratitude after having accepted the Quranic message: *That is because they believed and, again, disbelieved.* **(63:3)** Thus, while they have known what it means to accept faith, they nonetheless chose to revert to being ungrateful. No heart that has a sound understanding or appreciation of things, or indeed has life, would experience life under faith and then choose to return to ingratitude. How can anyone who understands, appreciates and experiences the concept of life that faith promotes, with its view of the universe, and also breathes the fresh air of faith and lets the light of faith shine over his world wish to revert to the miserable and suffocating darkness of unfaith? None will make such a choice except he who is filled with grudges that blind his sight and blunt his senses. Therefore, such people are in the miserable condition the sign describes: *So a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* **(63:3)**

The Chapter draws a unique picture of such people inviting ridicule and describing them as aimless, leading a futile existence, and nursing grudges. It presents an image of them that serves as an object of ridicule: **(63:4)**

Thus, they are merely an outward appearance, not real human beings who respond and interact. They may look pleasant to the eye as long as they remain silent, but when they speak they show them-

selves to be devoid of sense and feeling. They are like timbers, but not just any kind of wood: they are propped up against a wall, unable to move. This stone-cold picture shows the reaction of their souls, that is if they have souls at all. This is then complemented with a state of constant apprehension, perpetual fear and uncertainty: *They assume that every Cry is against them.* **(63:4)** They know themselves to be hypocrites, covered by a thin veil of pretense, false oaths and attempts to appease. Therefore, they live under the constant dread that their reality will be exposed. The Chapter shows them always turning around, dreading every move and every shout. They imagine that every cry is setting a chase after them. Thus, spiritually, they are like propped up pieces of wood, but when it is a question of fear for one s life or property, they look like a trembling reed in a storm. In both cases, they are the main enemy of the Prophet and the Muslim community: *They are the enemy so beware of them.* **(63:4)** They are the enemy within, hiding within Muslim ranks. Therefore, they represent a greater danger than the external enemy. Therefore, the Prophet is instructed to beware of them. He is not, however, instructed here to kill them. Instead, he was to pursue a different course of action, one that reflected much wisdom and confidence that their schemes would come to nothing.

*God took the offensive. How they are misled!* **(63:4)** God wil indeed be their enemy wherever they turn. Such a prayer by Go Almighty means a verdict that is certain to take place. It is their inevitable outcome, as history has clearly shown.

### STIRRING UP TROUBLE

The Chapter continues to describe their actions, revealing the rancor in their hearts. It shows how they schemed against the Prophet, yet were quick with their lies when exposed. These were their known qualities: **(63:5-63:8)**

### DEALING WITH HYPOCRISY

When we consider the events and look at the people involved, as also the Quranic comments, we see the divine method of cultivating the first Muslim community and we marvel at how God conducts matters and events.

Thus, we see the first Muslim community infiltrated by hypocrites who live within its ranks for almost ten years, during the Prophet's lifetime, and he does not expel them. In fact, God does not make them known to him by name or person until shortly before his own death. He would know such a one only by the tone of his speech, the way he twisted words and tried to hide things. He also knew them

by their reactions to things and events. God had willed this so that people were not allowed to judge others' intentions and hearts. Judgment on these is for God alone. He alone knows what people harbor in their hearts and He alone requires people to account for them. As for us, we judge people by what we see before our eyes. Thus, no one is judged on the basis of suspicion. Even when God identified for His Messenger those who remained hypocrites until shortly before his death, the Prophet did not expel them from the Muslim community when they continued to put up a show that they were Muslims and fulfilled Quranic obligations.

### ARROGANCE AND DEPRIVATION

We will now discuss the Quranic signs that refer to the events taking place in Madinah: **(63:5)** They perform their actions, say whatever they may say, and then if they realize that the Prophet heard of their behavior they resort to cowardly ways. They swear an oath in an attempt to protect themselves. If, when feeling secure that they do not have to face the Prophet, someone says to them: Come, so that God's Messenger may ask forgiveness for you, they turn away in arrogance. Both characteristics of cowardice and arrogance go hand in hand among hypocrites. However, such behavior normally belongs to those who hold position and influence among people, yet feel themselves too weak for direct confrontation. They resort to arrogant behavior as long as they do not have to confront the truth. Yet when they are confronted with it, cowardice and false oaths are their mark.

Therefore, the Chapter addresses the Prophet, telling him what God has determined in the hypocrites' case, and since God's judgment has been passed, there is no longer any use in praying for their forgiveness: **(63:6)**

The Chapter goes on to relate some aspects of their transgression that were the cause of God's judgment: *hey, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away.* What they say betrays their wickedness and spitefulness.Their plan to starve the Prophet's Companions is the same strategy employed by all opponents of truth and faith in all generations and communities. In their perverted view, they think that all people are like them in giving paramount importance to food and survival. This was the plan the ungrateful followed when they imposed a total boycott on the Hashimite clan, to which the Prophet belonged, so that they would abandon him and hand him over to them. As we are told in this sign, it was also the plan upheld by the hypocrites. They hoped that it would ensure that, once hunger had bitten hard among the be-

lievers, they would abandon the Prophet.

Thus, we see the opponents of faith resorting to this obnoxious and dreadful method, forgetting the simple truth of which the Quran reminds them in the same sign: **(63:7)** It is indeed from these treasures of the heavens and the earth, which all belong to God Almighty, that these enemies of the truth receive their livelihood; yet they try to control the means of such livelihood available to believers. Yet they cannot even create their own sustenance. How stupid and dull-minded they are when they think they can stop others from receiving their sustenance!

God thus reassures the believers and strengthens their resolve to face up to such vile and odious plans. He tells them that God's treasures in the heavens and the earth are open to all. He who gives out of these treasures to His enemies will never forget the ones who believe in Him. In His grace, He does not impose mass starvation even on His enemies. He knows that if He were to deny them their provisions they would have nothing. Yet He is too merciful to abandon His servants, even the ones hostile to Him, to what is beyond their means of control. Mass starvation is a method adopted only by the most vile, obnoxious and wicked of people.

The Chapter also quotes the hypocrites' other words: *They say: If we returned to the city, certainly, would drive out the more mighty, the ones humble spirited from it.* **(63:8)** We have seen how Abd Allah ibn Ubayys words were made to come true at the hands of his own son, ensuring that the contemptible one could only enter Madinah by the permission of the most honorable one. *Yet to God belongs the great glory and to His Messenger and to the ones who believe.* **(63:8)** God includes with Himself His Messenger and the believers, bestowing His own honor on them. This is a gesture of honoring that only God can bestow. What is more honorable than God's hand placing the Prophet and the believers next to Himself and saying: Here We are, standing under the banner of honor, and this is the rank of the honorable.

God certainly tells the truth as He intertwines honor with faith in a believer's heart. Such is the honor that derives from God's own honor. It never shrinks, gives way or abandons a believer, not even in the most difficult of times, unless his faith weakens. When faith is solidly established in a person's heart, honor and dignity remain solid within him. *But the ones who are hypocrites know not.* **(63:8)** How are they to know when they do not appreciate this sort of honor and dignity and are cut off from their eternal source?

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What facts are relevant to this issue?
What facts must we consider in deciding this issue?
What information do we need?
Do you mean that your classmate is assuming that ...?
The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ?
Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question.
You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary.
My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories.
What is the most basic concept in my question?
What Quranic terms have I learned?
What are the key concepts (definitions) of the Quranic message in this section?
What ideas or principles does the Quranic message clarify?
What theories does the Quranic message present?
Is this idea causing problems for me or for others?
I think this is a good theory, but could you explain it more fully?
What is the main hypothesis you are using in your reasoning?
Are you using this term in keeping with established usage?
What idea is this author using in his or her thinking?
Is there a problem with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.
I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.
I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary

## Lesson 104(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
## Right Judgment

The condition or quality of being true, correct, or exact; freedom from error or defect; precision or exactness; correctness; faithful representation of the truth.

## Quranic Chapter 63: The Hypocrites (al-Munafiqun) Signs 63:9-63:11

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Let not your wealth divert you nor your children*
*from the Remembrance of God.*
*And whoever accomplishes that, then,*
*those, they are the ones who are losers.* (63:9)
*And spend of what We provided you*
*before approaches death to any of you.*
*Then, he will say: My Lord! If only* ***You*** *would postpone it*
*for a little term then,*
*I would be charitable and be among*
*the ones in accord with morality.* (63:10)
*But God never postpones it for a soul*
*when its term drew near.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (63:11)

### Commentary°
### Time to Be Charitable

The last address in the Chapter is made to the believers whom God placed, together with His Messenger, in His own rank, making them share in His honor and dignity. He wants them to climb to this high summit, ridding themselves of any characteristic that is akin to those of the hypocrites. They should prefer such superior elevation to everything else, including their property and offspring. Nothing must be allowed to divert their attention from aspiring to such lofty heights: **(63:9-63:11)**

Money and children can preoccupy a person making him oblivious to everything else, that is, unless his heart alerts him to the aim of his existence, making him feel that he has a superior goal. This goal must be one that is worthy of the creature in whom God has blown of His own spirit, giving him the aspiration to achieve a few divine characteristics, albeit within his own human limitations. God has given him riches and offspring so as to fulfil his task of building human life on earth, but not so that he is so fully preoccupied with

them that they distract him from remembering God and from being in contact with the source of his humanity. Those that are so distracted: *then, those, they are the ones who are losers.*(63:9) The first thing they lose is their human identity, which is dependent on maintaining the bond with the source of man's humanity. Whoever loses himself has lost everything, regardless of the size of his wealth and the number of his offspring.

With respect to charitable donations, the Chapter here touches their hearts in several ways: (63:10) This reminds us of the source of all that we have. It is all from God in whom we believe and who instructs us to be generous and charitable. Such giving should be done: *before approaches death to any of you* It should be a result of the person's own action before death overtakes him and he leaves everything behind for others to enjoy. If he does not do so then he will look around only to discover that he has put nothing forward for his own salvation. This is the worst stupidity and the greatest loss.

He will then feel pangs of regret and wish he could have more time to be charitable and join with those people who are righteous. Such wishes benefit him nothing, for *But God never postpones it for a soul when its term drew near.* (63:11) How can he now put forward anything when the chance is gone? *And God is Aware of what you do.* (63:11) Several touches within a short space are thus made at the right place, immediately after depicting the hypocrites' characteristics and their scheming against the believers. When the believers stand firm in God's own rank, they will be protected against the hypocrites. It serves them well, then, to fulfil the duties that their faith requires of them. They must never abandon their remembrance of God, as this is the source of their ultimate safety. Thus does God use the Quran to educate and cultivate believers' minds and hearts.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

Your teacher presents you with a problem, not lectures or assignments or exercises. Since you are not handed "content", your learning becomes active in the sense that you discover and work with content

that you determine to be necessary to solve the problem. Your teacher acts as facilitator and mentor, rather than a source of "solutions".

Problem based learning will provide you with opportunities to:

* examine and try out what you know
* discover what you need to learn
* develop your people skills for achieving higher performance in teams
* improve your communications skills
* state and defend positions with evidence and sound argument
* become more flexible in processing information and meeting obligations
* practice skills that you will need after your education

### WRITE A PROBLEM STATEMENT

A problem statement should come from your/the group's analysis of what you know, and what you will need to know to solve it. You will need: a written statement; the agreement of your group on the statement; feedback on this statement from your instructor. (This may be optional, but is a good idea).

## Lesson 105(1). Critical Thinking: Intellectual Standard

### Clarity

The word "clarity" or "to be clear (*bayan*)" occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as having clarity or being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarity in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error. Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

### Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:1-58:6

**Madinah:** *Surely, God heard the saying*
*of she who disputes with you about her spouse*
*and she complains to God*
*and God hears conversing between you both.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.* (58:1)
*Those who say to their wives: Be as my mother's back,*
*they (f) are not their mothers.*
*Their mothers are only those (f) who gave them birth.*
*And, truly, they say that which is unlawful*
*among their sayings and an untruth.*
*And, truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving.* (58:2)
*And those who say: Be as my mother's back,*
*to their wives and again, retract what they said,*
*then, the letting go of a bondsperson*
*before they both touch one another.*
*That is of what you are admonished.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (58:3)
*He who finds not such means then, formal fasting*
*for two successive months before they both touch one another.*
*And for him who is unable to fast,*
*the feeding of sixty needy persons.*
*That is so that you believe in God and His Messenger.*
*And those are the ordinances of God.*
*And for the ones who are ungrateful, a painful punishment.* (58:4)
*Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger,*

*they were suppressed as those who before them were suppressed.*
*And, surely, We caused clear portents, signs to descend.*
*For the ones who are ungrateful is a despised punishment* (58:5)
*on a Day when God will raise them up altogether*
*and tell them of what they did.*
*God counted it while they forgot it.*
*And God is a Witness over everything.* (58:6)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

In this Chapter we are invited to witness some of the events that the first society that followed the Quranic message experienced as it began to take shape in Madinah. In this way, we see how it was molded and prepared to undertake its role in the world. It was a huge undertaking, starting with the development of a new, complete and comprehensive concept of life that continues to serve as the basis for how the Muslim community conducts its practical affairs. That first Muslim community, however, was to present this concept to the world; it was its responsibility to establish a new foundation for life based on this concept.

That first Muslim community, which was being prepared for this great role, consisted of ordinary human beings. Its elite were the Emigrants and Helpers whose concept of their new faith had matured and who now dedicated themselves to it completely. They understood the truth of their existence as part of the existence of the universe Thus, they realized that they were part of God's will manifested ii the universe. They neither deviated from it nor lagged behind in theii march with it. They were, in fact, as they are described in the last signs of the Chapter: **(58:22)**

This elite group formed a minority in the ever-increasing numbers that swelled the Muslim community's ranks, particularly after it came to be held in awe, and this before Makkah had fallen to the Quranic message. People flocked to the Muslim community but without having received enough Quranic education or having lived long enough in a Quranic environment. Moreover, hypocrites found their way into the Muslim community, trying to serve their own interests or avoid personal trouble. These vacillated between the Muslim community and its still powerful opponents, whether idolaters or Jews.

To educate this community in preparation for its great and important role in the world at large required strenuous effort, patience and slow but sure treatment in small and serious matters alike. All in all, it was a major social engineering project that the Quranic message brought and the Prophet undertook. It sought to build individu-

als who could establish a Quranic society and an state based on the Quranic message as a divine constitution. Each person had to understand this code of living, implement it and carry it to the world at large in the form of a vibrant society. It was not therefore a mere theory devoid of substance.

In this Chapter we are shown some practical examples of this great endeavor as well as some aspects of the Quranic method of building the Quranic character and dealing with events, personal whims and habits. We also see some aspects of the long conflict between the Quranic message and its opponents: Jews, idolaters and hypocrites.

This Chapter in particular gives us an inspiring image of the care God took of this fledgling Muslim community as He provided it with a sound education and purged its unwanted streaks, developing His presence within its consciousness. He showed the Muslim community that He was with them looking after even their most private affairs and minor events, protecting it from its enemies' schemes, whether subtle or apparent. God had placed it fully under His care and, therefore, He molded its morality, manners, habits and traditions. Those Muslims formed His party in human society and they carried His banner, identifying themselves as His people on earth.

Thus the Chapter draws right at the start a picture from that unique period of human history, characterized by direct contact between heaven and earth, and with heavens direct involvement in the daily life of this particular group of people: . **(58:1)** What we see here is the involvement of heaven, providing judgment, in the ordinary affair of a small, poor family. God listened to the woman's argument as she pleaded with the Prophet, yet Ayisha, the Prophets wife who was nearby, could hardly hear her. This picture fills us with the pleasure of feeling God to be near us, taking care of our concerns.

The Chapter then confirms that those who contend with God and His Messenger, i.e. enemies of the Muslim community, are destined to be the losers on earth and to endure humiliating suffering in the life to come. They will be punished for their evil deeds which God reckons but they forget, even though these are their own deeds: *And God is a Witness over everything.* **(58:6)**

This is followed by a reminder that God is present when any group of people, three or more, engage in secret discussion, thinking that they are totally unobserved. God is with them wherever they happen to be: **(58:7)** Our feelings of God's presence are here enhanced by the realization that He is fully aware of all that takes place.

This reminder of God's presence serves as preparation for the warning issued to those who in their secret conversations conspire

to harm the Muslims and cause them grief. They are warned that God sees all their scheming and records all their conspiring. He knows what they intend of sin, aggression and disobedience of Gods Messenger. They are told that God will take them to account for all this. He will punish them as they deserve to be punished. The Muslims are also issued with a command not to speak in secret about anything that is in conflict with righteousness and God-consciousness.

The Chapter continues with its purpose of educating the Muslim community, urging the believers to adopt good and friendly manners, showing their obedience, when they attend the Prophet s circle or any circle of study or worship. It lays down some rules for discussion with the Prophet, highlighting the seriousness of such discussion. The remainder of the Chapter speaks about the hypocrites who befriend the Jews and conspire with them, and who then try to conceal this with false swearing before the Prophet and the Muslim community. It depicts an image of them in the life to come when they are also quick to repeat their false oaths, trying thus to avoid Gods punishment. They think that since their swearing in this world spared them the anger of the Prophet and his followers, it may spare them God's anger on the Day of Resurrection. The Chapter re-emphasizes that those who contend with God and His Messenger are the ones to suffer humiliation; they are the losers. This is something that Go has decreed, just as He decreed that He and His messengers will pr vail. This is stated in order to show the weakness of any hostile p sition. Yet at the time, some Muslims thought such people to be toc strong and tried to maintain good relations with them. They did not realize the importance of the Muslim community having an independent stand under God's banner, and feeling safe under His care.

As the Chapter draws to its end, it paints a bright picture of God's party, represented at that time by the elite community of Emigrants and Helpers. This is the situation that the Quran wants the Muslim community to end up with. God has heard the words of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband, and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. God hears all and sees all.

## Lesson 105(1) 58:1-58:6

### A Personal Case in Dispute

God has heard the words of the woman who pleads with you concerning her husband and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. God hears all and sees all. Even if any of you say to your wives, **(58:1-58:4)**

In pre-Quranic days, a man who became angry with his wife

might say to her, "You are to me like the back of my mother", and thereafter she was forbidden to him. She was not divorced however, but rather in a state of suspense. She could neither have normal marital relations with her husband nor be free to find some other arrangement for herself. This was yet another aspect of the unfair treatment of women in pre-Quranic Arabia.

These signs speak of one such event that took place before the ruling on this problem, known as *zihar*,1 had been laid down. The details of the case relating to the woman at the center of the case, Khuwaylah bint Thalabah:

It was concerning me and Aws ibn al-Samit that God revealed the opening sign of the Chapter, The Pleading. I was married to him and he had grown old, with a quick temper. He came in one day and I questioned something he had said. He was angry as a result and said to me: *Be as my mother's back.* He then went out and sat with his people for some time. He came back later and he indicated that he wanted to have sex. I said: In no way! By Him who holds Khuwaylah's soul in His hand, you cannot approach me when you have said what you said until God and His Messenger have ruled in our case. He tried to force me, but I overpowered him in the way a woman can overpower a weak old man. I left him and went to one of my neighbors to borrow a dress from her.

I went to the Prophet and sat in front of him. I told him what had happened and complained strongly about my husband's bad manners. The Prophet said to me: Khuwaylah! Your cousin is an old man; so be kind and God-conscious in your treatment of him. Before I left, revelations were bestowed from on high concerning me. The Prophet experienced what he usually experienced when revelations were given to him. Then he came to and said: Khuwylah! God has revealed Quranic sign concerning you and your mate. He then read to me the signs starting with: *Surely, God heard the saying of she who disputes with you about her spouse* and complained to God. God has heard what you both had to say. *God hears conversing between you both.*

The Prophet then said to me: Tell him to free a POW/slave. I said: Messenger of God! He does not have the means to do so. He said: Then let him fast two consecutive months. I said: He is certainly an old man who cannot fast. He said: He should then feed sixty poor people with a wisq (A wisq is a measure of volume estimated to weigh about 130 kilogrammes of wheat) of dates. I said: Messenger of God! By God, he cannot afford that. The Prophet then said: We will help him, then, with a sack of dates. I said: Messenger of God! I, too, will help him with another sack. The Prophet said: That is good and kind of you. Go and give this to charity on his behalf, and

take good care of your cousin. I did as the Prophet told me.

This, then, is the case of the woman whose argument with the Prophet God heard and listened to. It is on the basis of this case that God pronounced His ruling from on high, giving this woman her right so that she and her husband could be free of worry. He thus showed the Muslims what to do if such a family problem occurred.

This is the personal situation that opens a Chapter of the Quran, God's book, whose words are echoed by the universe as they are bestowed from on high. It opens with the statement: *Surely, God heard the saying of she who disputes with you about her spouse and she complains to God.* We see here that God is present in this private case of a woman who is a mere individual in the community at large. God is not so preoccupied with conducting the affairs of the universe as not to listen to an individuals case and give His ruling on it.

### EDUCATION THROUGH PRACTICE

When we look at the Quranic report of this case, we cannot miss that elements of education and guidance are given side by side with the verdict and the comment on it. This is the usual method of the Quran, providing all that is necessary.

This is an amazing opening. **(58:1)** The Chapter then states the principle that governs such cases: *And, truly, they say that which is unlawful among their sayings and an untruth.* **(58:2)** This deals with the case in its entirety. *Zihar* does not rely on any solid basis. A wife is not a mother so as to become forbidden like one. Somebody's mother is the woman that gave birth to that person. A wife cannot become a mother at the utterance of a word or a few words. Such a statement lacks all substance, it is utter nonsense. In life, all relations should be based on what is true, clear and solid so as to prevent any muddle or confusion. *And, truly, God is Pardoning, Forgiving* what has passed of such incidents.

Having laid down the principle so clearly, the verdict is stated in detail: **(58:3)** God has made freeing a slave a way of atonement for various offenses. This is one way the Quranic message freed those who had fallen into slavery in consequence of the system prevalent at the time, which allowed for the enslavement of prisoners of war. Various views have been stated with regard to the phrase: *and again, retract what they said,* We choose the view that says that they resume marital relations which they had earlier forbidden themselves by *zihar*. The freeing of a slave should occur before it becomes permissible for them to so go back. A comment is added here: *That is of what you are admonished.* **(58:3)** The atonement required is an admonition and a warning against reverting to this totally unacceptable

practice. *And God is Aware of what you do.* (58:3) He knows its nature, how it happens and your intention in doing it.

This comment is given before the verdict is completed. It serves to keep hearts alert and to strengthen discipline, reminding people of God s authority and His knowledge of whatever is apparent or concealed. The Chapter then states: **(58:4)** This is followed by a comment and a directive: *That is so that you believe in God and His Messenger.* **(58:4)** These people were indeed believers. However, this clarification and these penalties provide a direct link between their affairs and Gods order. This makes belief operative in ordinary life, giving faith real authority in society. *And those are the ordinances of God.* **(58:4)** He has set these bounds so that people will not transgress them. He is also angry with those who do not observe these bounds. *And for the ones who are ungrateful, a painful punishment.* because of their transgression, lack of faith and going beyond the limits He has defined.

### IN CONTENTION AGAINST GOD

The last sentence in the sign,' Grievous suffering awaits those who will not believe? is certainly a fitting ending as it completes the discussion of the woman's situation, while also providing a bridge to the theme of the next sign that speaks about those who contend against God and His Messenger. This is characteristic of the superb Quranic method as it smoothly moves from one theme to another: **(58:5-58:6)**

These people who are in contention: *Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger, they were suppressed as those who before them were suppressed.* **(58:5)** The way this sentence is phrased in Arabic may be understood as a prayer against them. A prayer by God is a sentence of judgment that makes it inevitable since it is He who pronounces this sentence, and His will is always done. The phrase, 'those who lived before them,' refers either to earlier communities who were punished by God, or to the then the ungrateful who suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of the Muslims prior to the revelation of this Chapter, as happened, for example, at the Battle of Badr.

*And, surely, We caused clear portents, signs to descend.* **(58:5)** This sentence separates the two fates suffered by the ungrateful in this life and in the life to come, in order to point out that both fates are clearly stated in these signs. It also tells us that these ungrateful do not face these fates as a result of ignorance or any ambiguity in the truth. Indeed, the truth has been put to them clearly and lucidly in these revelations, which they too have been given.

As the Chapter refers to their fate in the hereafter, it adds an inspiring comment that serves an educational purpose: **(58:5-58:6)** They are made to suffer shame in punishment for their arrogance. This shameful suffering will take place on the day when all will be resurrected. Thus, it will be seen by all. Besides, the suffering is forgotten these, God has recorded them all, as nothing escapes His knowledge: *And God is a Witness over everything.* **(58:6)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### THINKING ALOUD

Think aloud about the problem we are faced with in these Quranic signs. Engage in thinking aloud to yourself. What is known as private speech never disappears. Whenever we encounter unfamiliar or demanding activities in our lives, private speech resurfaces. It is a tool that helps us overcome obstacles and acquire new skills.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.

When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what I am saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words);
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words;
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had;
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant.

In other words, I frequently stated, elaborated, illustrated and exemplified my points.

## Lesson 105(2). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Fairness (right-minded)

Having fairness is described as in the Quran as having wisdom (*hikmah*). It is considered to be the ability to form judgments that are free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom in the Quranic sense is to have experience, knowledge and good or right judgment. Out of these develops a sense of impartiality so that we learn to weigh two differing points of view equally.

Developing a sense of fairness is the ability to make judgments free from discrimination or dishonesty. Having wisdom is to have experience, knowledge and good judgment. From this fair-mindedness or wisdom comes a sense of impartiality, that is, an inclination to weigh two views or opinions equally.

Using a sense of fairness when weighing two views or opinions helps us overcome any lingering egocentricity. We may have thought that we knew the truth only to find that we were wrong. We also learn not to judge any ideas until we are familiar with them and we have fully understood them.

Thinking critically, we are able to consider both the strengths and the weaknesses of differing points of view. We learn to put ourselves in place of others in order to understand them and what they are saying. We learn to overcome our self-centered point of view of identifying truth with our immediate perceptions or long-held beliefs. We gain the ability to accurately state the viewpoints and reasoning of others. We reason from premises, assumptions and ideas that are not our own. We can recall times when we were wrong but convinced that we were right. We begin to realize that our behavior and judgments affect others so that we learn to see things from another's point of view.

## Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:7-58:13

**Madinah:** *Have you not considered that God knows*
*whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*There will be no conspiring secretly of three,*
*but He is their fourth nor of five, but He is the sixth,*
*nor of fewer than that nor of more, but He is with them*
*wherever they had been.*
*Again, He will tell them of what they did*
*on the Day of Resurrection.*
*Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (58:7)
*Have you not considered those who were prohibited*
*from conspiring secretly?*
*Again, they revert to what they were prohibited from*
*and hold secret counsel in sin and deep-seated dislike*
*and in opposition to the Messenger?*

*And when they drew near you they gave you greetings with that*
*with which God gives not as a greeting to you*
*and they say to themselves:*
*Why punishes us not God for what we say?*
*Hell will be enough for them.*
*They will roast in it.*
*Then, miserable will be the Homecoming!* (58:8)
*O those who believed!*
*When you hold secret counsel, hold not secret counsel in sin*
*and deep-seated dislike and in opposition to the Messenger.*
*But hold secret counsel for virtuous conduct*
*and God-consciousness and be God-conscious*
*before Whom you will be assembled.* (58:9)
*Conspiring secretly is only from Satan*
*that he dishearten those who believed.*
*But he is not one who injures them at all,*
*but with the permission of God.*
*In God let the ones who believe put their trust.* (58:10)
*O those who believed! When it was said to you:*
*Make ample space in the assemblies, then, make room.*
*God will make room for you.*
*And when it was said: Move up, then, move up.*
*God will exalt those among you who believed*
*and those who were given the knowledge in degrees.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (58:11
*O those who believed! When you consulted with the Messenger*
*put charity forward in advance of your conversing privately.*
*That is better for you and purer.*
*But if you find not the means, then, truly,*
*God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (58:12
*Are you apprehensive to put forward charity*
*in advance of your conversing privately?*
*If, then, you accomplish it not,*
*God turned in forgiveness to you.*
*Perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms*
*and obey God and His Messenger.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (58:13)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHISPERS AND CONSPIRACIES

The Chapter then portrays God's presence in an inspiring image that leaves a telling effect on our hearts: **(58:7)**

The sign begins by stating God's knowledge that takes in every-

thing in the heavens and earth. Our imagination is left to roam across the wide horizons and the remote corners of the earth, drawing a picture of this knowledge that leaves out nothing large or small, apparent or hidden, in this vast universe. It then draws gradually closer touching its addressees' hearts, presenting an image of Gods knowledge that shakes them strongly:. **(58:7)**

*Again, He will tell them of what they did on the Day of Resurrection.* **(58:7)** This statement sends a shudder of fear into peoples hearts. The mere presence of God and His hearing of all conversations is ominous. Now they look at the consequences of this presence in the form of punishment. What happens when that which people say in secret is publicized in the presence of all on the Day of Resurrection, when all humanity of all generations are witnesses!

The sign ends in the same way as it started, giving a general image: *Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* **(58:7)** Thus the notion of Gods full and comprehensive knowledge, which is stated in various ways in this sign, is driven home to everyone. This inevitably leaves a profound effect on our hearts and minds.

This awesome picture of God's knowledge serves as an introduction to a warning issued to the hypocrites who held secret conversations, conspiring against the Prophet and the Muslim community in Madinah: **(58:8)**

The sign suggests that the Prophet's initial policy in dealing with the hypocrites was to advise them to be clear and sincere in their attitude, and to stop conspiring with the Jews against the Quranic message. Yet still they persisted in their deviant ways, scheming against the Muslim community, trying in every way possible to disobey the Prophet and cause disruption.

The sign also suggests that some of them used to offer their greeting to the Prophet in a twisted way, giving it a bad meaning: *And when they drew near you they gave you greetings with that with which God gives not as a greeting to you and they say to themselves: Why punishes us not God for what we say?* **(58:8)** They might have used the same means as the Jews did when they pronounced the greeting, peace be to you, as, *assam* (*alaykum*, which means death to you. They might have used some other way that appeared innocent but which nonetheless concealed an ill wish. They even thought that had Muhammad been truly a Prophet, then God would have punished them for what they said by way of greeting or in their whispers and secret conversations.

It is clear from the way the Chapter opens then unfolds that God had told the Prophet of what they said and schemed. The Chapter began with the announcement that God heard the woman pleading

with the Prophet, and then it stated that God is witness with any group, large or small. All this suggests that He informed the Prophet of the hypocrites' schemes and the thoughts they harbored.

An answer is given to their ill-conceived thoughts: *Hell will be enough for them. They will roast in it. Then, miserable will be the Homecoming!* (58:8)

### WHAT TO SAY IN SECRET

The Chapter then addresses the believers by their very quality of having accepted the faith. It tells them that they must not indulge in the sort of secret whispers the hypocrites resorted to, encouraging each other to commit sin, aggression and disobedience of the Prophet. It reminds them to remain God-conscious and tells them that such whispers as the hypocrites engage in is inspired by Satan who aims to cause grief to the believers. Therefore, it is totally unbecoming of those who have faith:

It seems that some in the Muslim community had not fully absorbed the sense of Quranic discipline: (58:9-58:10) Such people met when times were hard to consult among themselves, and this was unknown to their leadership.

Some people are put off secret conversations and side whispers unknown to the Muslim community to which they belong and whose interests are the same as their own. In other words, they must not think themselves separate from the Muslim community in anyway. The Chapter tells them that when other Muslims see such side whispering and secret conversations, they are hurt by them. They feel apprehensive, concerned that a lack of trust has crept into the community. Satan always tries to tempt whisperers to go further in order to cause worry and grief to others. However, the Chapter reassures the believers that Satan will not achieve his purpose: *Conspiring secretly is only from Satan that he dishearten those who believed. But he is not one who injures them at all, but with the permission of God.* (58:10) Believers place their trust in God and in no one else.

This is a wise precaution against what causes suspicion. Sometimes, however, there is need for a private discussion in order to keep a secret, or to avoid a scandal. This is acceptable and it normally takes place among community leaders. It must never, however, be through a side group with the rest of the community unaware of what is going on. Such a practice is divisive and leads to friction and grief, which is Satan's aim. God's promise is definitive. Satan will not achieve his purpose by such means, because God will protect the Muslim community. He is fully aware of every secret conversation, every conspiracy against the Muslim community. Satan can never harm the believers: *but with the permission of God.* (58:10) This ex-

ception is added to emphasize that God's will is absolute and free of restriction in any situation to which His promise applies.

*In God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(58:10)** He is the Guardian who protects the believers. He is the Almighty who knows all, the Witness to all things. Nothing in the universe escapes His knowledge. Nothing occurs unless it be by His will. He has promised to protect the believers. Could there by anything more reassuring?

### REFINED MANNERS

The believers are encouraged to maintain another aspect of good behavior and fine manners: . **(58:11)**

Again we note the Quranic method of making people willing to comply with every instruction. The Chapter promises those who make room for others that God will make good room for them: *God will make room for you.* **(58:11)** It also promises those who were instructed to leave their place so as to give it to others that they will enjoy an elevated position with God: *God will exalt those among you who believed and those who were given the knowledge in degrees.* **(58:11)** This, in recompense for their obedience and accommodating attitude.

The occasion was one of being close to the Prophet in order to learn from him. The Chapter teaches believers that good faith, which makes people accommodating and obedient, and knowledge, which refines hearts and manners, will ensure a higher position with God. This as a reward for willingly vacating a position close to the Prophet, obeying his order given for a particular purpose he had in mind: *And God is Aware of what you do.* **(58:11)** He rewards people according to what He knows of their feelings and intentions.

Ali ibn Abi Talib was the one who acted on the instructions given in this sign: *O those who believed! When you consulted with the Messenger, put charity forward in advance of your conversing privately. That is better for you and purer. But if you find not the means, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(58:12)** According to reports, he set aside a number of dirhams, i.e. the silver currency of the time. Whenever he wanted to speak alone to the Prophet he gave one dirham in charity. This requirement was nonetheless difficult for the Muslims, as they were generally poor. The instruction, however, fulfilled its purpose, making them aware of the value of a private conference with the Prophet. God lightened their burden, revealing the next sign which abrogated the requirement of paying to charity before such a conference took place. The sign also directed the Muslims to attend better to their various aspects of worship:

*Are you apprehensive to put forward charity in advance of your conversing privately? If, then, you accomplish it not, God turned in forgiveness to you. Perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and obey God and His Messenger. And God is Aware of what you do* (58:13)

These two signs and the reports we have about the occasions in which they were revealed provide an aspect of the educational efforts that aimed to cultivate the manners and social approach of the Muslim community, even in matters of detail that were not particularly serious.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HOW DOES OPEN-MINDED CRITICAL THINKING HELP?

- Refine/revise the topic either narrowing or broadening it according to outcomes of research.
- Rank or indicate the importance of three sources of research.
- Clarify any opinion, prejudice, or bias their authors have.
- While an opinion is a belief or attitude toward someone or some thing, a prejudice is preconceived opinion without basis of fact while bias is an opinion based on fact or research.
- Identify key words and concepts that seem to repeat. Is there vocabulary you need to define?
- Are there concepts you need to understand better?
- In reviewing your research, are there
  - Sequences or patterns that emerge?
  - Opposing points of view, contradictions, or facts that don't "fit?"
- Summarize two points of view that you need to address.
- What questions remain to be answered?

**Summary of critical thinking:**

- Determine the facts of a new situation or subject without prejudice
- Place these facts and information in a pattern so that you can understand and explain them
- Accept or reject your resource values and conclusions based upon

your experience, judgment, and beliefs

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tested myself before I went to class by trying to summarize, orally or in writing, the main points of the previous class meeting because I realize if I cannot summarize main points, I haven't learned them.

I learned to test my thinking using intellectual standards: Being clear, accurate, relevant, precise, reasonable.

## Lesson 105(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Embodying a Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective

Human thought is relational and selective. It is impossible to understand any person, event, or phenomenon from every vantage point simultaneously. Our purposes often control how we see things. Critical thinking requires that this fact be taken into account when analyzing and assessing thinking.

### How is Point of View defined?

The point of view for this course on Quranic Studies is that of the Quran. All the words in the Quran are the Words of God as revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet related whatever was revealed to him through the Angel Gabriel (*ruh al-qudus*) with God's permission.

The Quranic point of view gives guidance to humanity through the prophetic mission, to bring people from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge and wisdom. As 14:1 says: *This is a Book We caused to descend to you so that you have brought humanity out from the darkness into the light with the permission of their Lord to the path of The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (14:1)

In the Quranic revelation, darkness is not just an individual's state of ignorance, but includes his worship of material gain in place of worshipping God, egoism, being a slave to his desires and being greedy, among other things.

On the level of society, darkness refers to injustice, oppression and/or discrimination and persecution as the sign to Moses (14:5) says: *Certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs saying: Bring out your folk from the shadows into the light and remind them of the Days of God. Truly, in that are signs for every enduring, grateful one.* (14:5)

The darkness here refers to the oppression and injustice of Pharaoh while the light is that of justice and freedom. The Quranic signs that refer to darkness or shadow and light always refer to darkness or shadow in the plural, while light is in the singular referring to the path of God-consciousness (*taqwa*).

## Quranic Chapter 58: She Who Disputes (al-Mujadilah) Signs 58:14-58:22

**Madinah:** *Have you considered those who turned in friendship*
*to a folk against whom God was angry?*
*They are not of you, nor are you of them*
*and they swear to a lie while they know.* (58:14)
*God prepared a severe punishment for them.*
*Truly, they, how evil is what they had been doing!* (58:15)
*They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext*

*and they barred from the way of God.*
*So for them is a despised punishment.* (58:16)
*Avails them not their wealth and their children against God at all.*
*Those will be the Companions of the Fire.*
*They are ones who will dwell in it forever.* (58:17)
*On a Day when God will raise them up altogether,*
*then, they will swear to Him as they swear to you,*
*assuming that they are something.*
*They, they are ones who lie.* (58:18)
*Satan gained mastery over them,*
*so he caused them to forget the Remembrance of God.*
*Those are of the Party of Satan.*
*Regard the Party of Satan,*
*they will be the ones who are losers.* (58:19)
*Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger,*
*those are among the humiliated in spirit.* (58:20)
*God prescribed: I will prevail,*
*truly, I and My Messengers.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (58:21)
*You will not find any folk who believe in God and the Last Day*
*who make friends with whoever opposed God and His Messenger*
*even if they had been their fathers or their sons*
*or their brothers or their kinspeople.*
*Those, He prescribed belief in their hearts,*
*and confirmed them with a Spirit from Himself.*
*And He will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run*
*as ones who will dwell in them forever.*
*God was well-pleased with them*
*and they were well-pleased with Him.*
*Those are the Party of God. Lo! the Party of God.*
*They are the ones who prosper.* (58:22)

## Commentary°

### False Swearing

The Chapter speaks anew about the hypocrites who befriended the Jews in Madinah, describing their true position and attitude. It threatens to expose their hypocrisy and to inflict a terrible end upon them. It makes clear that the Quranic message will be triumphant, despite all their schemes and conspiracies: **(58:14-58:19)**

This strong denunciation of the hypocrites who befriended those who had incurred God's anger, i.e. the Jews, suggests that these hypocrites were very active in scheming against the Muslim community, conspiring with its avowed enemies. It also suggests that the author-

ity of the Quranic message had now been consolidated so as to strike fear into the hypocrites' hearts. Thus, when the Prophet and the believers confronted them with what God might have exposed of their scheming, they resorted to swearing falsely, denying what was attributed to them, knowing, however, that they lied as they swore. They hoped that by thus forswearing they would spare themselves any punishment for scheming against the Muslim community: *They took their oaths to themselves as a pretext and they barred from the way of God. So for them is a despised punishment.* **(58:16)**

Repeated warnings are issued to them in this passage: **(58:15-58:17)** The Chapter describes their abject and miserable position on the Day of Judgment when they will swear to God as they used to swear to people: *On a Day when God will raise them up altogether, then, they will swear to Him as they swear to you, assuming that they are something. They, they are ones who lie.* **(58:18)** This description suggests that hypocrisy had become so entrenched in their hearts that it would remain with them on the Day of Judgment, in the presence of God who knows peoples deepest secrets and innermost thoughts: *they swear to you, assuming that they are something.* **(58:18)**

The Chapter brands them as confirmed liars: *They, they are ones who lie.* **(58:18)** It then explains the cause of their condition: *Satan gained mastery over them, so he caused them to forget the Remembrance of God. Those are of the Party of Satan. Regard the Party of Satan, they will be the ones who are losers.* **(58:19)** A heart that forgets to remember God becomes corrupt and given to evil: *Those are of the Party of Satan.* **(58:19)** They stand under his banner, act in his name, obey his instructions, work for his objectives. This situation of unmitigated evil ends in total loss: *Regard the Party of Satan, they will be the ones who are losers.* **(58:19)**

Such hypocrites were intimate with the Jews, thinking that they were a power to be reckoned with. Therefore, they always sought their help and advice. Therefore, God makes it clear to them that His enemies will always suffer defeat and humiliation, while His cause and His messengers will be victorious: *Truly, those who oppose God and His Messenger, those are among the humiliated in spirit. God prescribed: I will prevail, truly, I and My Messengers. Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* **(58:20-58:21)**

### THE MEASURE OF FAITH

As the Chapter draws to its close, it outlines the constant rule that believers apply, or the accurate measure of faith as it settles in people's hearts: **(58:22)**

This provides complete comparison between God's party and

the party of Satan. It is a question of taking ones final and unhesitating position with the party of distinction, after discarding all burdens and temptations, so as to uphold the one and only tie. *You will not find any folk who believe in God and the Last Day who make friends with whoever opposed God and His Messenger.* **(58:22)** Never has God put two hearts in one man's body. Never can anyone harbor two loves in his heart: one love for God and His Messenger and one for their enemies. It is all a question of faith or unfaith; the two can never meet: E*ven if they had been their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their kinspeople.* **(58:22)** All bonds of kinship and blood relations are severed when they come into conflict with faith. These bonds may however be maintained and respected if there is no contention or dispute between the two camps. The Quran instructs believers to maintain good relations with parents if they are the ungrateful, provided that there is no war going on between Gods party and Satan's party. Should there be contention, war and conflict, these bonds are to be totally severed.

*Those, He prescribed belief in their hearts, and confirmed them with a Spirit from Himself.* **(58:22)** Faith is confirmed in their hearts by God's hand, written in their breasts by His right hand. It cannot be erased or be subject to ambiguity or confusion. They cannot achieve such resolve without the support of a spirit of His own making. Their hearts cannot beam so brightly without the light that emanates from this spirit, gives them strength and binds them to the only true source of strength and light.

*And He will cause them to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever.* (58:22) This is their reward for abandoning every tie and bond, and discarding all desire for worldly temptation. *God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him.* **(58:22)** This is a pleasant picture that radiates contentment and reassurance. It shows us the situation of these believers in their lofty position and pleasant surroundings. They bask in their feeling of mutual pleasure with their Lord. They maintain their links with Him and discard all others. He then accepts them, admits them to His presence and makes it clear to them that He is pleased with them. They are gratified by this closeness to Him.

*Those are the Party of God. Lo! the Party of God.* They rank under His banner, move under His leadership, follow His guidance, implement His code of living, and do on earth what He has willed, as they are part of His will. *They are the ones who prosper.* **(58:22)** Who will be successful if God s partisans are not?

Thus humanity is split into two groups: God's party and Satan's party, raising two banners: the banner of the truth and the banner of

falsehood. Every person must choose to either belong to God's party and support the truth or to side with Satan, standing under the banner of falsehood. The two parties are clearly separated. They can neither meet nor mix.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells us that the treasures that God sends down are in a know measure. What are some of the treasures that God sends down? The fertilizing winds and rain water. There are underlying important numbers to be studied in understanding how the universe and the earth work. Everything has a known number. God is the Creator and Originator of the universe.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to think Quranically in regard to there being no compulsion in the way of life (*din*).

I studied the signs as a way to begin to think Quranically. (Since you are in a Quranic Studies class, your goal should be to think Quranically.)

I was able to ask questions.

I engaged myself in lectures and discussions by asking questions.

By asking questions, I realized that I discovered what I did and did not know.

## LESSON 106(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## THINKING INDEPENDENTLY

The Quran teaches us to think for ourselves when we read sign 2:256 that says that there is no compulsion in religion (*din*).

With this sign from God's point of view, we learn that it is up to each of us to have a close read of the Quran and decide whether or not to follow it. From reading the Quran with a critical mind, we learn how right judgment is clear from error. If we develop the following Quranic strategies or principles, and then practice the application of the principles, we will enhance our sense of intuition and insight. We will enhance our ability to reflect on our beliefs and actions. Quranic thinking encourages autonomous thinking, thinking for ourselves. We acquire many of our beliefs at an early age when we have a strong tendency to form beliefs for irrational reasons (because we want to believe, because we are rewarded for believing or punished for not doing so).

Quranic thinkers use critical skills and insights to reveal and eradicate beliefs to which they cannot rationally assent such as the beliefs of extremists. Quranic thinkers learn not to passively accept the beliefs of others; rather, they analyze issues themselves, reject unjustified authorities, and recognize the contributions of justified authorities. They thoughtfully form principles of thought and action; they do not mindlessly accept those presented to them. Nor are they unduly influenced by the language of another. If they find that a set of categories or distinctions is more appropriate than that suggested by another, they will use it. Recognizing that categories serve human purposes, they use those categories which best serve their purpose at the time. They are not limited by accepted ways of doing things. They evaluate both goals and how to achieve them. They do not accept as true, or reject as false, beliefs they do not understand. They are not easily manipulated.

Independent thinkers strive to incorporate all known relevant knowledge and insight into their thought and behavior. They strive to determine for themselves when information is relevant, when to apply a concept, or when to make use of a skill. They are self-monitoring: they catch their own mistakes; they don't need to be told what to do every step of the way.

The purpose or goal needs to be understood when you concern yourselves with accuracy and truth. You should ask yourself:

What evidence do I have to support this purpose?
How it can be explained to help others understand?
Can objections be raised from other points of view?
Are there any limitations to our point if view?

In the Quranic view, there is no compelling of ourselves or others to whatever it is that a person believes. This is what the Quran calls: "right judgment that is clear from error". It is free of being compelled to believe something.

It is possible to believe something because those around us believe in it or because someone has rewarded us for believing such-and-such. Or, it may be that our interests are best served by believing something or because someone is more comfortable believing this. It could also be that we believe in something because our ego and image of ourselves is defined by believing this-or-that. None of these reasons are that of a Quranic critical thinker because these reasons lack the evidence which the Quranic message provides. Each of us has to make up his or her own mind using 'right judgment' about what it is that we believe.

In order for students to be sure that their beliefs and actions are based on good reasons and evidence provided by the Quranic message, they need to be rational. They do this by critiquing their own irrationality which includes their own fears and desires. They are rational when they cultivate their desire for clarity, accuracy and fair-mindedness and, then, integrate them into their behavior and thoughts.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 49: THE INNER APARTMENTS (AL-HUJURAT)

## SIGNS 49:1-49:10

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Put not yourselves forward in advance of God and His Messenger.*
*And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (49:1)
*O those who believed!*
*Exalt not your voices above the voice of the Prophet*
*nor publish a saying to him as you would openly publish something*
*to some others so that your actions not be fruitless*
*while you are not aware.* (49:2)
*Truly, those who lower their voices near the Messenger of God,*
*those are those who are ones God put to test their hearts*
*for God-consciousness.*
*For them is forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* (49:3)
*Truly, those who cry out to you from behind*
*the inner apartments, most of them are not reasonable.* (49:4)
*And if they endured patiently until you would go forth to them,*
*it would have been better for them.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (49:5)
*O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you*
*with a tiding, then, be clear*
*so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance.*
*Then, you would become ones who are remorseful*
*for what you accomplished.* (49:6)
*Know you that the Messenger of God is of you.*

*If he obeys you in much of the affairs, you would,*
*certainly, fall into misfortune.*
*But God endeared belief to you*
*and made it appear pleasing to your hearts.*
*And He caused to be detestable to you ingratitude*
*and disobedience and rebellion.*
*Those, they are the ones who are on the right way.* (49:7)
*This is a grace from God and His divine blessing.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (49:8)
*And if two sections among the ones who believe*
*fought one against the other, then,*
*make things right between them both.*
*Then, if one of them was insolent against the other,*
*then, fight the one who is insolent until it changed its mind*
*about the command of God.*
*Then, if it changes its mind, make things right between them justly.*
*And act justly. Truly, God loves the ones who act justly.* (49:9)
*Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters,*
*so make things right between your two brothers/sisters.*
*And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (49:10)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

This Chapter, composed of no more than 18 signs, is majestic, indeed superior. It includes a number of basic facts of faith, Quranic law and human existence. It opens up before our hearts and minds wide horizons and gives rise to a host of important thoughts. It refers to systems of formation and organization, principles of education and upbringing, fundamentals of legislation and essential directives which could take a hundred times its length. It puts before our eyes two great issues for reflection and deliberation.

### REFINING ROUGH MANNERS

The Chapter starts with this first loving address that aims to alert hearts: **(49:1-49:5)** Believers, do not make any suggestion to God or His Messenger, concerning any of your affairs or of life in general. Do not presume to have a say in any matter before God has stated, through His Messenger, what He wants concerning it. Do not attempt to judge any matter unless you first refer to what God and His Messenger say.

We see that it is all a question of a psychological attitude defining the standards to be observed in relation to God and His Messenger, and the process by which instructions are received and carried

out. This is an essential part of how Quranic law is enacted and implemented. It is all based on an essential God-conscious quality and its reinforcement. This quality stems from the awareness that God hears all and knows all. Furthermore, this all-embracing truth is incorporated into one single, short sign.

The believers applied this standard to their relationship with their Lord and His Messenger. None of them would ever presume to suggest anything to God or His Messenger. None would voice an opinion unless God s Messenger asked him to do so. None would make a judgement concerning any matter without first referring to what God and His Messenger said about it.

### WHEN SPEAKING TO THE PROPHET

The second aspect of good manners concerned the Prophet's Companions' own discourse with him and the respect they should feel and show. This was to be observed in how they spoke to him and in the level of their voices. This was how they should manifest their respect for the Prophet as they sat with him. As God drew their attention to this requirement, He addressed them by that quality they loved to have and warned them that violation of His orders might bring grievous consequences in its wake: **(49:2)**

Piety that manifests itself in a God-conscious attitude is a great gift God grants to certain hearts He chooses after initially testing them. **(49:3)** It is thus implanted only in hearts that are suited to it, having first proven their merit. Those who lower their voices in the presence of God s Messenger are they who have proven themselves in a test of hearts. They are the ones who fear God, a quality that earns them forgiveness and a rich reward from God.

The ninth year of the Muslim calendar is called: The Year of Delegations because delegations from all over Arabia arrived in Madinah to embrace the Quranic message and pledge their loyalty to the Prophet. The Chapter refers to an incident that took place that year when the delegation of Tamim arrived. These were unrefined Bedouins. They shouted to the Prophet from outside his wives' apartments that were situated next to the mosque: Muhammad, come out and speak to us! The Prophet disliked their uncivilized manner. Therefore, the next sign of the Chapter was revealed: **(49:4-49:5)**

### MAKING SURE BEFORE TAKING ACTION

The first address **(49:6-49:8)** in the Chapter defines the leadership and the source from which to receive orders. The second establishes the standards of manners and respect to be maintained in dealing with this leadership. Both serve as the basis for all legisla-

tions and directives that follow in the Chapter. It is imperative for the source and the leadership to be well defined so that directives and instructions be given their true value and so that they are properly obeyed. Therefore, the third address explains to the believers how to receive news and reports and the need to verify their reliability: *O those who believed! If one who disobeys drew near to you with a tiding, then, be clear so that you not light on a folk out of ignorance. Then, you would become ones who are remorseful for what you accomplished.* **(49:6)**

The sign specifically mentions the evildoer because he is more likely to lie. It is important that suspicion should not be widely spread in the Muslim community. If every report is doubted, the system of gathering intelligence and information becomes paralyzed. In a Muslim community, individuals are normally treated as trustworthy, and the information they bring is considered reliable. An evildoer is treated differently: his information is not accepted until it is verified. Thus, the community steers a middle way between accepting and rejecting the information relayed to it. The community does not rush into action on the basis of a report given by someone whose behavior leaves much to be desired. Such rash action might lead to committing a wrong against other people, and subsequent regret. Furthermore, such rash action may incur God's displeasure and put the community in a position of committing an injustice.

### MAKING LIFE TOO HARD

This is a reality **(49:7)** that we can very easily imagine because it actually happened. However, when we reflect on it, we see that it is superior, beyond imagination. Is it easy to imagine a continuous, dynamic contact between heaven and earth, witnessed by all, whereby heaven speaks to people on earth about their public and private affairs, correcting their errors one by one, and giving them advice about their most intimate affairs? Any one of them might do or say something, or even entertain a thought, and yet heaven is aware of it all. What happens next is that God informs His Messenger of what has taken place and directs him to do or say whatever is necessary about it. This is something so great that it might not be fully appreciated by some of those present at the time. Therefore, they are reminded of it in this particular way: **(49:7)** In other words, be aware of this fact and give it its due importance.

One outcome of this new-found knowledge is that they must not act presumptuously in the presence of God and His Messenger. The Quran, however, puts this even more lucidly and forcefully, telling the Muslims that what God s Messenger decides on any matter, on

the basis of God's revelation or inspiration, is good for them as it combines ease and mercy. Had God's Messenger obeyed all their thoughts, they would have found matters far more difficult. God is more aware than them of what is of benefit to them. His Messenger represents mercy in everything he chooses for them: *Know you that the Messenger of God is of you. If he obeys you in much of the affairs, you would, certainly, fall into misfortune.* **(49:7)** This implies that they should leave all their affairs in the hands of God and His Messenger. They should submit fully, surrendering themselves to God s will, implementing His orders as they receive them, and suggesting nothing to God s Messenger.

The Chapter then draws their attention to the grace of faith He guided them to, making their hearts warm to it as He revealed its beauty and benefit such that they would love it dearly. He has also made unbelief, wrongdoing and sin hateful to them. All this is part of God's grace which He bestows on them: **(49:7-49:8)**

The human being is hasty, but he is unaware of the likely consequences of his precipitate action. The human being may also make suggestions concerning his own or other people s affairs, without knowing whether his suggestions will bring benefit or cause harm: *And whoever repents not, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (17:11) If the human being would only submit himself to God, accepting what God chooses for him, knowing that God's choice is better, more compassionate and beneficial for him than what he may choose for himself, he would be much more comfortable. He would complete this short journey on this planet with ease and contentment. But this is also an aspect of God's grace which He grants to whomever He wills.

### FIGHTING BETWEEN MUSLIM BELIEVERS

This **(49:9-49:10)** is a practical rule to protect the community of believers from strife resulting from excesses and hard feelings. This rule is given immediately after the requirement to verify the reports given by evildoers, making sure that the believers do not rush into action that may be counterproductive. Whether this sign was revealed in consequence of a particular case, as some reports suggest, or whether it was merely initiating a piece of legislation to outline what the Muslim community should do in such cases, it nonetheless provides a general and highly effective rule that stamps out strife and ensures solidarity within the Muslim community. It also establishes justice, Tightness and fairness. All this is based on believers being God-conscious and their hope that He will bestow His grace on a community that deals with justice and works for reconciliation.

The Quran either supposes or confronts the possibility of two groups of believers taking up arms against each other, yet it accepts that both are believers, even though one of them, or indeed both of them, may be in the wrong. It requires the Muslim community, other than the two fighting groups, to work for reconciliation between the two. But if one of them acts wrongfully, refusing to give up what it has no right to claim, or indeed if both act wrongfully, refusing reconciliation or refusing to abide by God's law over that which they dispute, then the believers must fight those who act wrongfully until they revert to God's commandment. The commandment at issue here is the ending of strife and conflict between believers and accepting God's judgement over anything contentious. Should those acting wrongfully revert to God s commandment, then the believers should establish reconciliation based on strict justice and equity, in obedience of God and seeking His pleasure: *Truly, God loves the ones who act justly.* **(49:9)**

This judgement is followed by a touch that aims to bring out genuine feelings of brotherhood among believers. It is the bond that unites them after they have fallen out. They are also reminded of the need to always be God-conscious, suggesting that this is the only way to earn His grace. *Only the ones who believe are brothers/sisters, so make things right between your two brothers/sisters. And be God-conscious so that perhaps you will find mercy.* **(49:10)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In read-

ing it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

## LESSON 106(2). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO AND SOCIO-CENTRICITY

In the Quranic perspective, ego-centricity as exemplified by the extremists as being selfish, self-centered, egocentric, thinking only of themselves without regard for the feelings or desires of others; having or regarding himself or herself as the center of all things. These are signs of ingratitude. It is to be irrational and unjust, having little or no regard for interests, beliefs, or attitudes other than one's own.

The ungrateful in Makkah at the time of the revelation, similar to the extremists today, cannot readily believe that they are acting out of self-interest. They continue to be unwilling to consider the point of view of others, believing that their view is 'the truth'. They refuse to accept the points of view of others when that would prevent them from getting what they thought that they want. They have to be right about everything. Being self-centered is the opposite of thinking critically.

Ego-centricity in terms of critical thinking is to confuse the immediate perception with reality. It manifests itself as an inability or unwillingness to consider others' points of view, to accept ideas or facts which would conflict with gratification of desire. In the extreme, it is characterized by a need to be right about everything, a lack of interest in consistency and clarity, an all or nothing attitude: I am 100% right; you are 100% wrong, and a lack of self-consciousness of one's own thought processes. The ego-centric individual is more concerned with the appearance of truth, fairness, and fair-mindedness, than with actually being correct, fair, or fair-minded. Egocentricity is the opposite of critical thought.

As people are socialized, ego-centricity partly evolves into socio-centricity. What is socio-centricity? It is the assumption by Salafi students that their own social group is inherently and self-evidently superior to all others. When a group or society sees itself as superior and so considers its views about the world as correct or as the only reasonable or justifiable views, and all its actions justified, there is a tendency to presuppose this superiority in all of its thinking and thus to think closed-mindedly. All dissent and doubt are considered disloyal, and rejected without consideration. Few people recognize the socio-centric nature of much of their thought. They develop a prejudice.

What is prejudice? A judgment, belief, opinion, point of view—favorable or unfavorable—formed before the facts are known, resistant to evidence and reason, or in disregard of facts which contradict it. Self-announced prejudice is rare. Prejudice almost always exists in obscured, rationalized, socially validated, functional forms. It enables people to sleep peacefully at night even while flagrantly abusing the rights of others. It enables people to get more of what they want, or to get it more easily. It is often sanctioned with a superabundance of pomp and self-righteousness. Unless students who are prone to radicalization recognize these powerful tendencies toward selfish thought in

the extremist ideology, even in what appear to be lofty actions and moralistic rhetoric, they will not face squarely the problem of prejudice in human thought and action.

Uncritical and selfishly critical thought are often prejudiced. Most instruction in schools today, because students do not think their way to what they accept as true, tends to give students prejudices rather than knowledge. For example, partly as a result of schooling, people often accept as authorities those who incite irrational fear in them and unjust opinions. This prejudice toward pseudo-authority impedes rational assessment. Ego-centric identification extends to groups. The individual goes from: I am right! to: We are right! To put this another way, people find that they can often best satisfy their egocentric desires through a group.

Their belief in their own rightness is easier to maintain because they suppress the faults in their thinking. They automatically hide their ego-centricity from themselves. They fail to notice when their behavior contradicts their self-image. They base their reasoning on false assumptions they are unaware of making. They fail to make relevant distinctions of which they are otherwise aware, and able to make (when making such distinctions does not prevent them from getting what they want). They deny or conveniently 'forget' facts inconsistent with their conclusions. They often misunderstand or distort what others say.

The solution, then, is to learn how the Quran, their sacred text, teache how to reflect on their reasoning and behavior; to make their assumptions ex plicit, to critique them, and, when they are false, stop making them; to apply the same concepts in the same ways to themselves and others; to consider every relevant fact, and to make their conclusions consistent with the evidence; and to listen carefully and openmindedly to those with whom they disagree. They can change egocentric tendencies when they see them for what they are: irrational and unjust. Therefore, the development of the awareness of students of their egocentric and sociocentric patterns of thought is a crucial part of education in Quranic critical thinking.

Students, and American Muslim students, in particular, should learn from the Quran how to reflect in order to solve any problem of self-centeredness or egocentricity that they may have. They should learn to reflect on their reasoning ability as well as on their behavior. This they do by clarifying their beliefs, critiquing them and when they realize that they may be false, they stop believing or behaving as they had been doing. They should reflect on all the relevant facts and make sure that their conclusions are consistent with the evidence they have before them. They need to listen carefully to others and be open-minded to other points of view.

Being self-centered carries over from an individual to one's society. Being sociocentric is to tend to regard one's own social group or family as superior to others. When students study the early pre-Quranic community, they find

that the Arabs in pre-Quranic times followed tribal law. Their slogan was: My tribe, right or wrong; my tribe is better than your tribe; my family is better than your family. This was how their individual self-centeredness transformed into socio-centricity. Thinkers, such as the pre-Quranic Arab, who were not critical thinkers, often confused their loyalty to their group by constant support even if their group was wrong. 'Group think' results when people egocentrically attach themselves to a group. One can see this in both children and adults: My daddy is better than your daddy! My school (religion, country, race, etc.) is better than yours.

If ego-centricity and socio-centricity are the disease, critical thinking that brings self-awareness is the cure. In cases in which their own egocentric commitments are not supported, few people accept another's egocentric reasoning. Most can identify the socio-centricity of members of opposing groups. Yet when we are thinking egocentrically or socio-centrically, it seems right to students (at least at the time).

Although everyone has egocentric, sociocentric, and critical (or fairminded) tendencies to some extent, the purpose of education in critical thinking is to help students move away from ego-centricity and socio-centricity toward increasingly critical thought. The sacred text helps students learn about their own sense of irrationality and injustice to the extent that it is present. Students should repeatedly discuss why people think irrationally and act unfairly.

The teacher can facilitate discussions of ego-centric or socio-centric thought and behavior whenever such discussions seem relevant. Such discussions can be used as a basis for having students think about their own egocentric or sociocentric tendencies. The class can discuss conditions under which people are most likely to be egocentric and how ego-centricity interferes with their ability to think and listen. By discussing what people think (and how they think) when they are being egocentric and sociocentric, students can begin to recognize common patterns of ego-centric thought. The class can discuss some of the common false assumptions they make at times. For example:

> Anyone who disapproves of anything I do is wrong or unfair.
> I have a right to have everything I want.
> Truth is what I want it to be. Different is bad.
> Our group (country, school, language, etc.) is better than any other.

## Quranic Chapter 49: The Inner Apartments (al-Hujurat)
## Signs 49:11-49:18

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Let not a folk deride another folk.*

*Perhaps they be better than they, nor women deride other women.*
*Perhaps they be better than they.*
*Nor find fault with one another nor insult one another*
*with nicknames.*
*Miserable was the name of disobedience after belief!*
*And whoever repents not, then, those,*
*they are the ones who are unjust.* (49:11)
*O those who believed! Avoid suspicion much.*
*Truly, some suspicion is a sin.*
*And spy not nor backbite some by some other.*
*Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his lifeless brother?*
*You would have disliked it. And be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God is Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate.* (49:12)
*O humanity! Truly, We created you from a male and a female*
*and made you into peoples and types that you recognize one another.*
*Truly, the most generous of you with God*
*is the most devout.*
*Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* (49:13)
*The nomads said: We believed.*
*Say to them: You believe not.*
*But say: We submitted to God, for belief enters not yet into your hearts.*
*But if you obey God and His Messenger,*
*He will not withhold your actions at all.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (49:14)
*The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God*
*and His Messenger.*
*Again, they were not in doubt*
*and they struggled with their wealth and themselves in the way of God.*
*Those, they are the ones who are sincere.* (49:15)
*Say: Would you teach God about your way of life*
*while God knows whatever is in the heavens*
*and whatever is in and on the earth?*
*And God is Knowing of everything.* (49:16)
*They show grace to you that they submitted to God.*
*Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me?*
*Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you,*
*truly, had been ones who are sincere.* (49:17)
*Truly, God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth.*
*And God is Seeing of what you do.* (49:18)

## COMMENTARY°

### NO RIDICULE, DEFAMATION OR INSULT

The human society the Quranic message establishes in the light

of Quranic guidance operates a high standard of manners. **(49:11)** Every individual in this society has his or her integrity, which may not be compromised. Indeed, it is part of the integrity of the whole community. To slander anyone is to slander oneself, because the whole community is a single entity and its integrity is one.

In this sign, the Quran again addresses the believers by their most beloved description, *O those who believed.* It forbids that one group should deride another, be they men deriding other men, or women deriding other women. For how can they know whether or not the ones they deride enjoy a better status with God?

The Quran, however, does not stop at implying this. It works on the sentiment of brotherhood in faith, reminding the believers that they descend from a single soul. Whoever defames anyone actually defames all. Therefore, the Quran says: *Let not a folk deride another folk.* **(49:11)** It should be mentioned that the word the Quran uses for defaming has a particular resonance that imparts a feeling that also has a physical effect.

Having outlined the true values in God's measure, and appealed to feelings of brotherhood and of belonging to one soul, the Chapter now reaches out to the believers' sense of faith, warning them that they will lose this noble quality if they indulge in derision and ridicule: *Nor find fault with one another nor insult one another with nicknames.* **(49:11)** To indulge in this is akin to renouncing faith after one has believed. The Chapter goes even further than this by threatening to consider this an act of wrongdoing, something that is often expressed in the Quran as being synonymous with associating partners with God. *And whoever repents not, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(49:11)** Thus, the Chapter establishes the rules for refined manners in a noble community.

### NO SUSPICION OR BACKBITING

This sign **(49:12)** establishes yet another fence in this noble society, protecting the integrity and freedom of individuals, while at the same time teaching people how to cleanse their feelings and consciences. Thus the Quran purges a Muslim's inner conscience so that it is not contaminated with evil suspicion and consequently incurs sin. It leaves it clean, free of doubt, entertaining only friendly and affectionate thoughts towards one s brethren. In this way it steers society away from suspicion so that the community enjoys reassurance and is not marred by worry and apprehension. Life in a community where ill thoughts have no place is both serene and comfortable.

The Quranic message does not, however, stop at this point in educating peoples hearts and souls. The sign we are looking at es-

tablishes a principle that applies to peoples dealings with each other. It protects the rights of those who live in its pure society so that they are not punished or tried on the basis of suspicion. Indeed, suspicion does not even form a proper basis for interrogating people or investigating their affairs.

This sign shows us the limit to which the Quranic message goes in protecting peoples freedom, integrity, rights and status. How does this compare with what even the best democratic countries boast of with regard to protecting human rights? This standard, which the Quran sets for believers, is far superior indeed. Moreover, the Quranic message achieves this in real life, after it establishes it in people's hearts and consciences.

The sign moves on to lay down another principle that provides social guarantees: *Avoid suspicion much. Truly, some suspicion is a sin.* **(49:12)** Spying may be an action that follows immediately on entertaining suspicion. On the other hand, it may be an independent action that seeks to look at other peoples faults and errors. The Quran opposes spying because it is morally base. It aims to purge people's hearts from sinking into this vile pursuit in order to keep up its high moral standards.

Next comes the order that forbids backbiting. This is given in such a way that it provides a graphic description of the disgusting nature of this action: *And spy not nor backbite some by some other. Would one of you love to eat the flesh of his lifeless brother?* **(49:12)** The order tells Muslims that they must not backbite. It then paints a scene that fills even the most insensitive of people with disgust. showing someone eating his dead brother's flesh. It immediately declares that they have, of course, a very strong and natural aversio to such behavior. Therefore, they also have a strong aversion agains backbiting.

Following all these prohibitions against suspicion, spying and backbiting, the Chapter awakens believers' God-conscious instinct, inviting anyone who has committed any of these unlawful acts to hasten and repent in the hope of God's mercy: *And be God-conscious. Truly, God is Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate.* **(49:12)**

With such consistent treatment the Muslim community was purged and attained its high standard. It became like a dream that came true, a model to be followed and relished.

### THE BROTHERHOOD OF HUMANITY

Having addressed the believers in such a way as to elevate them to a superior level of refined manners and morality, the Chapter then

addresses all humanity, of all races, colors and communities, reminding them that they all share one origin. One standard applies to them all: it is the same one that elevates the Muslim community to its superior level of unparalleled purity. **(49:13)** All of you people, who present such different races and colors, communities and tribes, come from one origin. Therefore, you should not divide into groups or fall out with each other and so waste your energy.

Humanity! You are being called by the One who created you out of a male and a female to inform you of the purpose of making you into nations and tribes. It is not so that you stir up conflict and enmity. It is rather for the purpose of getting to know one another and living peacefully together. Differences of language, color, temperament, manners, talents and abilities do not lead to conflict and strife. In fact, they make for cooperation so that all tasks are fulfilled and all needs met. Color, race, language, homeland and similar factors are of no importance in God's sight. There is only one criterion to determine peoples worth: *Truly, the most generous of you with God is the most devout.* **(49:13)** Noble indeed is the one who is noble in God's sight. He gives you your value on the basis of His perfect knowledge and His awareness of values and measures: *Truly, God is Knowing, Aware.* **(49:13)** Thus all dividing factors and values are discounted leaving only one measure and one value by which all humanity are tested.

### THE MEANING OF TRUE FAITH

As the Chapter draws to its end, it fittingly explains the truth of faith in reply to those Bedouins who claimed to be believers when they did not even understand the nature of faith. This also serves as a reply to those who tried to press their acceptance of the Quranic message as a favor they thought they did for the Prophet. In essence, they do not appreciate that it is only through God s favor that people believe.

The Bedouin say: **(49:14-49:18)**

The first of these signs is said to have been revealed in relation to the Bedouins of the Asad tribe who, as soon as they accepted the Quranic message, boasted saying, 'We have attained to faith.' They even counted this as a favor they performed for the Prophet. They said to him: Messenger of God! We have become Muslims. Other Arabs have fought you, but we have not. God wanted to show them the truth of what was in their hearts when they said this, stating that they only embraced the Quranic message in submission while the truth of faith had not touched their hearts or souls. *Say to them: You believe not. But say: We submitted to God, for belief enters not yet*

*into your hearts.* **(49:14)** Nevertheless, God's grace has dictated that they will be rewarded for every good action they do, letting nothing go to waste. Even the outward manifestation of the Quranic message, which has not yet penetrated into people's hearts to become genuine faith, is sufficient to make their good deeds count and be recorded. Thus, their deeds are not wasted like those of the ungrateful. No part of their reward is wasted as long as they continue to obey: *But if you obey God and His Messenger, He will not withhold your actions at all.* **(49:14)** This is because God is quick to grant forgiveness and bestow His mercy. He accepts from His servant the first step and rewards him for submission and obedience while waiting until faith settles in his heart: *Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(49:14)**

God then explains to them the nature of genuine belief: *The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God and His Messenger. Again, they were not in doubt and they struggled with their wealth and themselves in the way of God.* **(49:15)**

*Those, they are the ones who are sincere.* **(49:15)** They are true in their faith, and true to their claims that they are believers. Unless those feelings in a believers heart are a reality, bringing tangible effects into practical life, faith remains theoretical.

We need to reflect a little on the precautionary note in this sign: *The ones who believe are not but those who believed in God and His Messenger. Again, they were not in doubt.* **(49:15)** This point about never entertaining doubt is not a merely additional clause. It points to a real experience and provides treatment for a condition that may arise even after one has truly believed. The way this is phrased is significant, and never then entertained any doubt. The need to entertai no doubt and the need for the steadfast pursuit of the right way point to what a believing soul may experience under severe pressure and testing hardship. Doubt or hesitation may creep in. A believer may have to deal with severely testing times and calamities that shake the very foundation of his world. Therefore, the one who remains steadfast, entertaining no doubt and pursuing the right way in all situations is the one who deserves high rank with God.

Putting the fact in this way alerts believers' hearts to the slips and risks in their way. This enables them to take precautions, prepare themselves to withstand any hardship that comes their way, and maintain their course even in the face of the most adverse circumstances.

The Chapter continues its address to the Bedouins, telling them that God knows what is in their hearts. Furthermore, He can tell them what they harbour in their minds, without waiting for them to tell Him: *Say: Would you teach God about your way of life while God*

*knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth? And God is Knowing of everything.* **(49:16)**

*God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth* **(49:16)** His is a perfect knowledge that comprehends the very nature of everything in the heavens and the earth. His knowledge is not based on appearances and effects, but on a perfect knowledge of the nature of things that is independent of time and free of any limitation. Moreover, *And God is Knowing of everything.* **(49:16)** This encompasses the entire universe and everything in it.

### GOD'S REAL FAVOR

Having explained the true nature of faith, the Chapter then addresses the Prophet, referring to those Bedouins and how they asserted that they had done the Prophet a favors by accepting the Quranic message. This very action is clear evidence that the nature of faith had not yet penetrated their hearts. They had not yet experienced the beauty of faith: *They show grace to you that they submitted to God. Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me? Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)**

That God should select certain individuals from among His servants and grant them all this represents His immeasurable bounty and grace. Indeed, all other types of grace and bounty, including that which brings people into existence and gives them life, seem to dwindle by comparison to what faith represents. Later in the Chapter we will look in detail at God's words: *God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)**

God certainly tells the truth as He says: *They show grace to you that they submitted to God. Say: Show you submission to God as grace to me? Nay! God shows grace to you in that He guided you to belief if you, truly, had been ones who are sincere.* **(49:17)** Indeed faith is the supreme favor that can only be granted by God the Bounteous to whomever He knows to be deserving of it.

*Truly, God knows the unseen of the heavens and the earth. And God is Seeing of what you do.* **(49:18)** The One who knows all that is hidden in the heavens and the earth also knows what is hidden in people s innermost souls. He knows people's feelings and sees what they do. He does not derive His knowledge from the words they say, but from the feelings they harbour in their hearts and the actions that confirm their feelings.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### LEARN WHAT TERMS MEAN

**Outline**: An outline answer is organized description. You should give main points and essential supplementary materials, omitting minor details, and present the information in a systematic arrangement or classification.

**Prove**: A question which requires proof is one which demands confirmation or verification. In such discussions you should establish something with certainty by evaluating and citing experiential evidence or by logical reasoning.

**Relate**: In a question which asks you to show the relationship or to relate, your answer should emphasize connections and associations in descriptive form.

**Review**: A review specifies a critical examination. You should analyze and comment briefly in organized sequence upon the major points of the problem.

**State**: In questions which direct you to specify, give, state, or present, you are called upon to express the high points in brief, clear narrative form.

**Summarize**: When you are asked to summarize or present a summariza tion, you should give in condensed form the main points or facts. All details illustrations and elaboration are to be omitted.

**Trace**: When a question asks you to trace a course of events, you are to give a description of progress, historical sequence, or development from the point of origin. Such narratives may call for probing or for deduction.

**Say: Remember what you thought about ego-centric people before we studied them?**

Which of our original beliefs were false or misleading?
Why did we think that way?
Where did we get these ideas?
How do people come to think they know what other people are like before they know anything about them?
What false beliefs might other people have about us? Why?

**Questions to Generate Various Emotions•**

Thoughts when feeling anger: This is dangerous. I may be harmed.
Thoughts when feeling indifference: This is not right, not fair.

Thoughts when feeling relief: This does not matter, no one can do anything about this.

Thoughts when feeling positive: Things are better now. This won't bother me anymore.

**Questions to Evoke Personal or Social Change•**

Why was she willing to do this? Was she scared?

What else did she feel that helped her ignore her fears?

Why? How did she look at things that helped her endure and stick with it?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to evaluate my ideas based on what I had learned in this lesson.

I was able to then describe why I had these ideas.

After study, you should evaluate your ideas in light of what you have learned, and why you had these ideas.

# Appendix: Correlation between the Present Order of Chapters in the Quran and their Chronological Order

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Year 20*

Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

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## CA. MAY 11, 628 CE-APRIL 30, 629 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 20*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 30, 7 AH/ca. May 11, 628 CE-April 30, 629 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra ('Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: I: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. **EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. **GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. **RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. **USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. **MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. **UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the work of M. M. Sharif, "Philosophical Teachings of the Quran," and B. A. Dar, "Ethical Teachings of the Quran," (indicated by * in the text) in A History of Muslim Philosophy and to my dearest friend, Khalida Rahman who has been supportive of my work for over twenty-five years.

My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

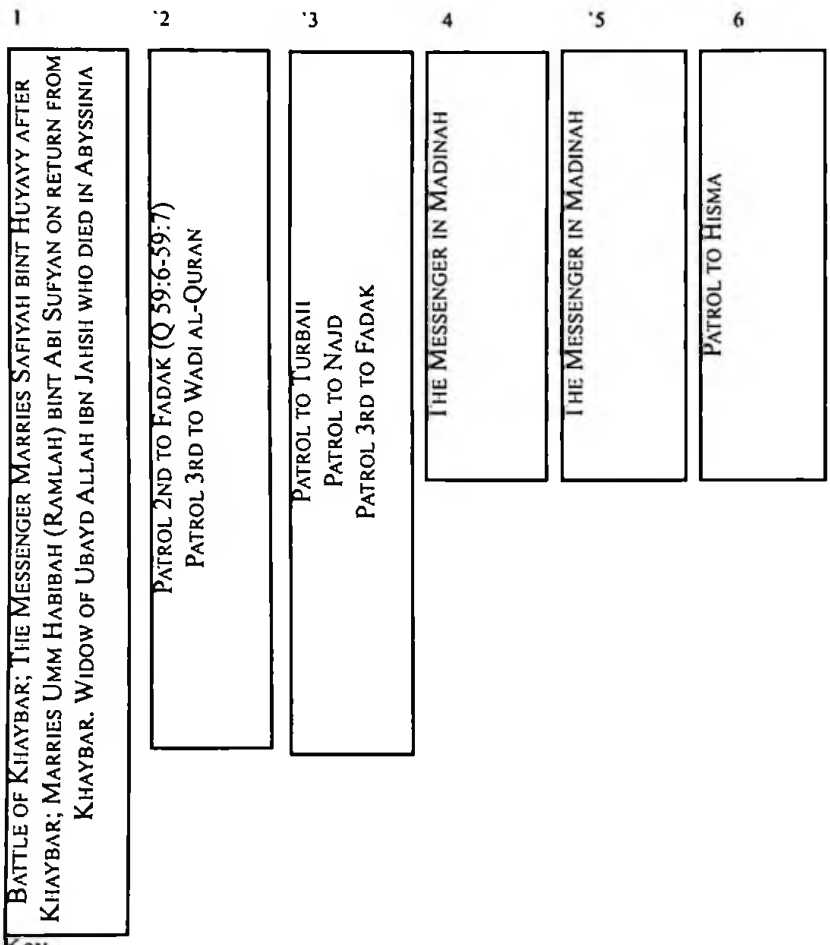
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 20*

## TIMELINE



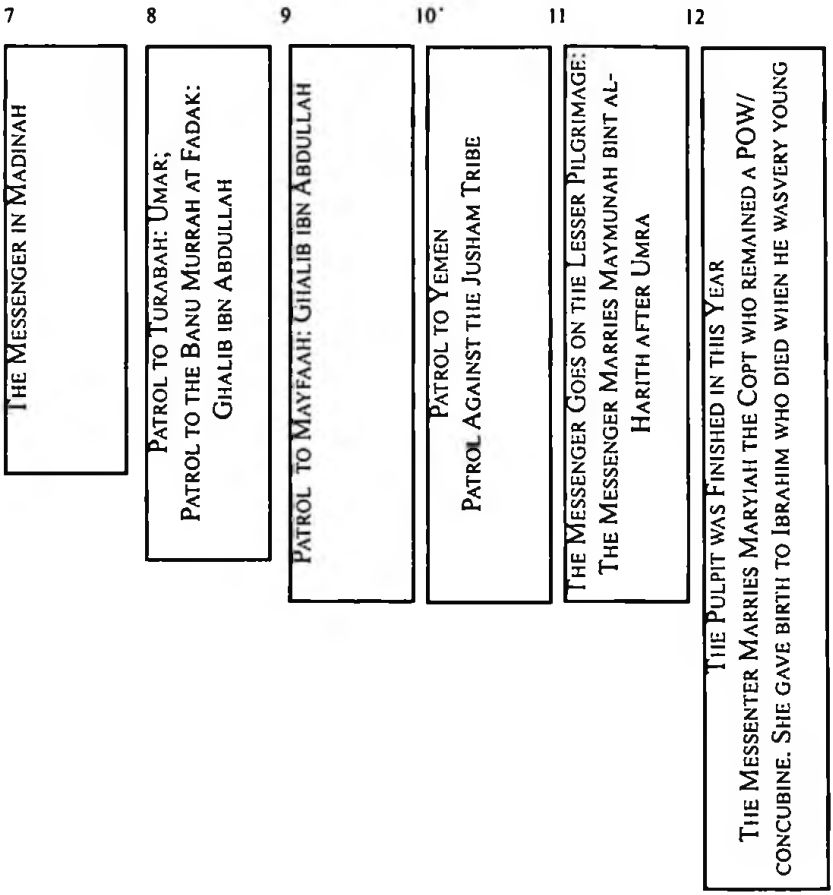

**Key**

1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# Preview *Book Year 20*

## Timeline




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle, Siege = Led by the Messenger
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 20* presented here begins with Lesson 107 and Quranic Chapter 66, the 107th chapter revealed followed by Quranic Chapters 64, 61 and finally Lesson 110 and Quranic Chapter 62, the 110th chapter revealed.

# PRELUDE

## THE CAMPAIGN TO KHAYBAR

After his return from al-Hudaybiya the Messenger stayed in Madinah during Dhu al-Hijja and part of al-Muharram, the polytheists superintending the pilgrimage. Then he marched against Khaybar.

The Messenger realizes that now that there is a truce with the ungrateful who practice ingratitude to the One God, it is time to secure the northern areas, the tribes of which had been instrumental in supporting the ungrateful at the Battle of the Confederates. He turns towards Khaybar, occupied by Jews who are hostile to the Quranic message.

Khaybar is an area of fortresses which had deemed to be impregnable. Although news traveled from Madinah to Khaybar that the Messenger is planning to besiege the fortresses, the Jews pay no heed because they have an army of 10,000 men and have been promised a 4000 strong army support from the Ghatafan tribe. The Muslim army arrives at Khaybar and takes position between Khaybar and its allies of the Ghatafan. All of this is done silently during the night. In the morning, when the farmers leave the fortress to go to their farm areas, they see the Muslim army.

The Messenger cries out::God is Greater; Khaybar is crushed!. And then he recites 37:177. The Jews hold a council and decide to defend the fortresses in separate groups. This decision came from their lack of unity which is revealed in the Quran (see 59:14). The Jewish tribes did not realize that they are up against a small, but united, army as the Quran proclaims in 61:4 and promises them victory in 2:249.

The Muslim army attacks the fortress closest to them on the first day. Garrisons from the other fortresses do not march out to help that garrison and it falls to the Muslim forces. In spite of the fact that the Khaybar army is known for its marksmanship in shooting arrows, and the nurses, including Umm Salamah, Safiyyah bint Abd al-Muttalib, Umm Ayman, Nusaybah, and Umm Sulaym, are prepared, the Muslims' shields hold the arrows at bay.

On the sixth night, when little more than the first garrison had been taken, 'Umar captures a spy who tells the Muslim army which fortress they may most easily capture and in which are located many weapons and war machines that had been used in the past to capture other fortresses. The Muslims take that fortress the next day and bring out the war machines including a ballista for hurling rocks and two testudos for bringing men up to the walls beneath a roof that is impregnable so they could go through the entrance. All of the smaller fortresses fall to the Muslims.

However, the Muslims face great resistance when they try to take the fortress named Naim. On the night before the attack, the Messenger says: Tomorrow I will give the standard to a man whom God and His Messenger love. God will give us victory by his hands; he is not one who turns back in flight.

The standard that the Messenger had taken to Khaybar is a large black

one made from a cloak of Ayisha called "the Eagle." This he gave to Ali ibn Abi Talib and he prays for victory which is granted after a great struggle on the part of the Muslim forces.

The Jews inside the remaining fortresses are wondering what had happened to the Ghatafan tribes' forces which had been promised to them. They do not know that the 4000 strong army had left their camp and had been moving towards Khaybar when they heard a voice saying: Your people! Your people! Your people! and they feared that the Muslims had attacked their homes instead of Khaybar so they returned to their own area. There they found everything in order, but decided that because of the delay they would not reach Khaybar on time to participate in the defeat of the Muslims which they thought had already come about.

Finally the Muslims faced the most difficult of the fortresses of Khaybar, that of the Citadel of Zubayr. The Muslim army besieged it for three days with no apparent effect on the people inside. Then a Jew slipped out from another fortress and in return for the safety of himself, his family, and his property, he told the Muslims that the people inside the Citadel of Zubayr had access to an underground river from inside the fortress so they did not store any water. If the Muslims prevented this water from flowing under the fortress, they would succeed in their siege. This is done and the Citadel of Zubayr falls to the Muslims.

Finally the Muslims besiege the last of the fortresses to offer any resistance, the one called Qamus. This fortress belonged to the leader of the Kinanah, the most wealthy and powerful of the Jewish Nadir clans. They hold out for fourteen days when finally they decide to negotiate with the Messenger. The Messenger agrees in exchange for their surrender of all of their property, the people could leave and no one would be killed or made captive. He warns the head of the Kinanah clan, however, that if anyone is caught trying to take any of his property with him, he would be killed.

As the people begin to leave the Messenger asks the leader of the Kinanah where the treasures of the Nadir tribe are, the ones that they would carry through the streets in their processions. The leader says that the treasure had been sold in order to buy arms and weapons for war. It is not long before the Muslims find the treasure and learn that the leader of the tribe himself had tried to hide it. He is put to death as he had been warned would happen.

The rest of the fortresses surrender on the same terms. A delegation is then sent to the Messenger asking if the Jews can remain as farmers of the land and that they will give half the annual produce to Madinah, in exchange. The Messenger agrees on condition that if he decides in the future they should be exiled, they will comply.

## LESSON 107(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS

In order to better analyze ourselves, we need to separate our sense of reason from their emotions, our *nafs al-natiqah* from our *nafs al-ammarah* as if we had two opposing parts in our mind. Yet, they are closely connected. Our reason is based on some level of our emotions and our emotions are based on some level of our reasoning. To develop self-understanding, to come to know who we are, we need to understand the connection between the two.

Those who develop Quranic critical thinking come to realize that they are responding to a situation with their feelings (emotions) rather than with their reason (thought).They realize that their feelings would change if they understood the situation in a different way.

The Quran cautions:

It has been found that uncritical thinkers are likely not to see any relationship between their feelings and their thoughts. This allows them to escape any responsibility for their feelings and thoughts and their resulting actions or behavior. The Quran says:

If we tend to base our decisions on our emotions, we need to understand them by asking ourselves the Quranic question: *Do they feel that they want other than the way of life of God* (din) *while to Him submitted whatever is in the heavens and the earth willingly or unwillingly and they are returned to Him?* (3:83)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 66: THE FORBIDDING (AL-TAHRIM)

### SIGNS 66:1-66:7

**Madinah:** *O Prophet! Why have you forbidden*
*what God permitted to you.*
*Looking for the goodwill of your spouses?*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (66:1)
*God imposed on you the dissolution of such of your oaths.*
*And God is your Defender.*
*And He is The Knowing, The Wise.* (66:2)
*And mention when the Prophet confided*
*to one of his spouses a discourse,*
*she, then, told it to another.*
*God disclosed to him of it.*
*He acquainted her with some of it and turned aside some of it.*
*When he told her about it, she said:*
*Who communicated this to you?*
*He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me.* (66:3)
*If you two repent to God, the hearts of you both*

*will be bent towards it.*
*And if you helped one another against him,*
*then, truly, God, He is his Defender and Gabriel*
*and ones in accord with morality, the ones who believe.*
*And the angels after that are his sustainers.* (66:4)
*Perhaps if he divorced you (f), his Lord will cause in exchange*
*for him spouses better than you (f),*
*ones who submit (f) to One God, ones who believe (f),*
*ones who are morally obligated (f),*
*ones who repent, ones who worship (f),*
*ones who are inclined to fasting (f),*
*women previously married and virgins.* (66:5)
*O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people*
*from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks*
*over which are angels, harsh, severe*
*who rebel not against whatever God commanded them*
*and they accomplish what they are commanded.* (66:6)
*O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day.*
*You are only given recompense*
*for what you had been doing.* (66:7)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

God has willed that the Quranic message should be His final message, and the code of living it outlines should be the one suitable for the rest of human life. Furthermore, the life of those who believe in the Quranic message should be consistent with the law that governs the universe, and the message should be the faith to guide human life and shape all its activities. Therefore, He made this code of living comprehensive and perfect, catering for all human abilities and potentials. At the same time, this code elevates such abilities and potentials to the level suited for the creature God has placed in charge of the earth, honoring him above many of His other creatures, and blowing into him of His own spirit. Consistent with this will of His, God has made the Quranic message naturally forward-looking. It enables life to grow while at the same time elevating it to the highest standard of purity. It does not stop any creative aspect or suppress a useful potential. On the contrary, it awakens and enhances these while ensuring a proper balance between forward movement and rising to a higher horizon. It is this which prepares the human spirit in this life for the superior happiness and bliss of the life to come, and the human mortal for a life everlasting.

God has also willed that the Messenger who delivers this final

message should be a man who reflects the faith, with all its distinctive characteristics and its special nature. Thus, as he goes through life, the Prophet becomes a true and practical translation of this faith, its nature and direction. He is an ordinary human being whose human abilities have attained a high standard: physically strong, with perfect constitution, sound senses, alert, able to perfectly feel all there is to feel. At the same time, he is full of emotion, naturally alert and sensitive, appreciates beauty, and is receptive and responsive. Moreover, he is of great intelligence, broad-minded, strong-willed, and he controls his feelings and reactions. Above all this, he is the Prophet whose soul reflects pure light, able to undertake the night journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and his subsequent ascendance to heaven. He is the one who is addressed from on high, sees the light of his Lord, and whose nature is in touch with the nature of everything in the universe: small and large stones greet him, the branches of trees yearn for contact with him, and Uhud, the mountain, shakes at his presence. All these powers and potentials are balanced within his personality in such a way as to reflect the balance of the faith he has been chosen to present to humanity.

God has made the Messenger's life, its private and public aspects, an open book for the benefit of his followers and humanity at large. They can read in it all aspects of the Quranic message and its practical implementation. Therefore, there is nothing in it that is secret or limited to a closed circle. Indeed, many of its aspects are stated in the Quran, revealing things that for an ordinary person are normally kept private. Indeed, even those aspects of human weakness, which are beyond our control, are left open for all to see. We almost see the wisdom behind so revealing such aspects of the Messenger's life to humanity. Nothing in his person or in his life belongs exclusively to him. He and all aspects of his life belong to his message. Why should, then, any aspect of his life be hidden? His life is the Quranic message, something that is both close to us and easy to implement. The Messenger is assigned the task of presenting it in practice in his own life, just as he presents it by word and directive. This is the role assigned to him.

His Companions—may God be pleased with them and reward them well—conveyed to us all the details of his life. Nothing, whether of little or great importance in his daily life, is left unrecorded. It was part of God's will to have such a detailed record of His Messenger's life, or rather to have a detailed record of the Quranic message as lived by the Messenger. What his Companions reported is added to what the Quran records of the Messenger's life and both form an everlasting record of this noble life, which benefits all humanity.

## THE MESSENGER'S WIVES

In its opening section, this Chapter presents an episode of life in the Messenger's home, showing some of the reactions and responses between some of his wives, and between them and himself. It also shows how these reactions and responses were reflected in the life of the Muslim community as a whole. This is followed by directives given to the community on the basis of what took place in the Messenger's homes, between his wives. The time when these events took place is not precise, but reference to the various reports detailing them confirm that they definitely occurred after the Prophet's marriage to Zaynab bint Jahsh.

It may also be useful to give here a summary of the Messenger's marriages and his home life at that time. This will enable us to visualize the events referred to in the Chapter. This brief outline is based on the work by Ibn Hazm and the Messenger's biography by Ibn Hisham. We will also add some brief comments as appropriate.

The Messenger's first wife was Khadija bint Khuwaylid. He was 25 when he married her. She was 40. She died three years before the Prophet's migration to Madinah. He did not marry another wife during her lifetime, and by then he was over 50 years of age.

After Khadijah's death, the Messenger married Sawdah bint Zimah. She was a widow of al-Sakran ibn Amr ibn Abd Shams. Her husband was one of the early Muslims, and he was among the first migrants to Abyssinia. When he died, the Messenger married her.

He then married Ayisha bint Abu Bakr. She apparently was young, and he did not hold his wedding with her until he had settled in Madinah. She was the only virgin he married. It is said that she was only nine years of age at the time of her marriage. By the time he passed away, she had been with him nine years and five months.

The Messenger then married Hafsa bint Umar, just over two years after settling in Madinah. She had been married before. Her father had offered her in marriage to Abu Bakr and to Uthman, but they both declined. The Messenger had promised her father something better for her so he married her himself.

The Prophet also married Umm Salamah. Her first husband, Abu Salamah, was wounded at the Battle of Uhud, and his wound did not heal until he died. The Prophet then married her, looking after her children by her first husband.

He then married Zaynab bint Khuzayma. Her first husband, Ubaydah ibn al-Harith ibn Abd al-Muttalib, was killed at the Battle of Badr. Zaynab died during the Prophet's lifetime. It is also reported that her first husband was Abd Allah ibn Jahsh who fell a martyr at the Battle of Uhud. Perhaps this report is more accurate.

Zaynab bint Jahsh was his next wife. He himself had given her in marriage to Zayd ibn Harithah, his former servant whom he had adopted as a son, but marital life between her and Zayd was fraught with difficulties. So, Zayd divorced her. She was pretty. Indeed, she was the one Ayisha's felt most able to compete with because she was the Prophet's cousin, born to his paternal aunt, and because of her beauty.

Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith was the next wife to be taken by the Messenger. This was in the middle of the sixth year of the Islamic calendar. Ibn Ishaq attributes the following report to Ayisha: When the Prophet distributed the women taken as POW/slaves after the Expedition of al-Mustalaq, Juwayriyyah fell to Thabit ibn Qays ibn Shammas or his cousin. She made an agreement with him to buy her own freedom. She was very pretty. Anyone who saw her felt very attracted. She went to the Messenger seeking his help in paying what she owed for her freedom. When I saw her at my doorstep, I hated her, realizing that the Messenger would see of her beauty what I saw. She entered his room and said to him: Messenger of God. I am Juwayriyyah bint al-Harith. My father is the chief of his tribe. You are not unaware of the trouble that has befallen me. I am here to seek your help in paying for my freedom after I had made an agreement to so buy myself. The Messenger said to her: What about something better? She asked him: What is that, Messenger of God? He said: I will pay for your freedom and marry you. She said: I accept. He said: It is done.

Mariyah the Copt, a POW/slave/concubine was presented to the Messenger by the ruler of Egypt. She bore him a son named Ibrahim who died at a young age. Mariyah remained a POW/slave-concubine.

The Messenger married Umm Habibah bint Abu Sufyan after the al-Hudaybiyah Peace Treaty. She had migrated to Abyssinia, but her husband, Ubayd Allah ibn Jahsh, who converted to Christianity there and left her. The Messenger proposed marriage to her. It was King Negus who officiated at the marriage and paid her dowry on behalf of the Prophet. She then returned to Madinah.

Following the Battle of Khaybar, the Messenger married Safiyyah bint Huyayy ibn Akhtab. Her father was the chief of the Jewish tribe, al-Nadir. She had been married to Kinanah ibn Abl al-Huqayq, a Jewish leader. Ibn Ishaq reports that she was brought to him with another woman who had fallen prisoner. Bilal walked them through the battlefield passing a number of Jews who had been slain. The other woman cried out loud as they passed by, throwing dust over her own head. The Messenger said: Take this devil woman away

from me. He ordered that Safiyyah be kept behind him, throwing his robe over her. His Companions thereby realized that he would take her himself. The Messenger is reported to have said to Bilal: Are you devoid of compassion? How can you walk two women through the grounds where their men folk have been killed?

Maymunah bint al-Harith ibn Hazn was the maternal aunt of Khalid ibn al-Walid and Abd Allah ibn Abbas. Before marrying the Messenger she was married to Abu Ruhm ibn Abd al-Uzza, or perhaps, Huwaytib ibn Abd al-Uzza.

Rayhanah bin Zayd from the Jewish al-Nadir tribe captured with the POW/slave-concubines after the defeat of the Qurayzah tribe. She remained his POW/slave-concubine until her death. She died before the Messenger.

At the death of the Messenger, three of his wives had passed away before him and Mariyah remained a POW/slave-concubine after his death. Many of the tribes had been eager to claim a marriage relationship with the Messenger.

Thus, we see the special reasons that made it necessary for the Messenger to marry each of his wives. He was chosen as a human being, but with superior qualities and characteristics. Different as they were, his motives for whatever he did in his life, including his marriages, matched his superior qualities. In his home, he lived with his wives as a human being entrusted with the delivery of God's message. Indeed, God commanded him to declare the fact: *Say: Glory be to my Lord! Have I been but a mortal Messenger?* (17:93)

## THE EVENT

The opening section **(66:1-66:7)** of the Chapter speaks of an event in the lives of the Prophet and his wives. Based on this incident and the directives issued in connection with it, particularly the request that the two conspirators among the Prophets wives repent, the Chapter also calls on believers to repent of their sins and requires that heads of families ensure their families are well brought up. They are specifically urged to protect themselves and their families from hell. A direct image of hell is also included here. The Chapter then concludes by citing various examples. Noah's and Lot's wives are shown as examples of ingratitude in a house emanating belief, while Pharaoh's wife is depicted as someone holding to right faith while living in a house full of the ungrateful. Mary is also shown as a pure woman who received a breath of God's spirit and believed in God's words and scriptures. **(66:1-66:5)**

## THE REPORTS

The Prophet used to have a honey drink at Zaynab bint Jahsh's home and then stay for some time with her. Hafsa and Ayisha secretly agreed that when he came to either of them they would say to him: You have eaten *maghadfir* (*maghdfir* is a glue-like type of food with a sweet taste and bad smell); I can smell it. When this occurred, he said: No. I only had a honey drink at Zaynab's. I will not do it again, and I have made an oath to this effect. Do not tell anyone of this. This is what he prohibited himself, even though it was permissible for him to have.

It seems that either Ayisha or Hafsa told her co-conspirator of the Messenger's decision to no longer take this honey drink. God then informed him of the same. He went back to her and mentioned some of what went on between the two of them, but without recounting it all in order not to embarrass her. He only touched upon the subject so that she realized that he was aware of it all. Surprised, she asked him: Who told you all this? It might have occurred to her that his other wife was the one to tell him. *He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me.* **(66:3)**

His information, then, was given by the One who knows it all, which, in turn, implies that the Messenger was also aware of it in toto, not merely what he mentioned to her.

This incident angered the Messenger, exposing as it did that intrigue was going on in his home. He, therefore, swore that he would not touch any of his wives for a full month. People in the Muslim community also heard that the Messenger was thinking of divorcing his wives. This Chapter was then revealed and the Messenger's anger subsided. Subsequently, he resumed his life with his wives.

## THE QURANIC DISCUSSION

We will now look at its treatment in the Quran. The Chapter begins with a mild reproach by God to His Messenger: *O Prophet! Why have you forbidden what God permitted to thee. Looking for the goodwill of your spouses? And God is Forgiving, Compassionate. God imposed on you the dissolution of such of your oaths. And God is your Defender. And He is The Knowing, The Wise.* **(66:1-66:2)**

The reproach is mild but effective. It is not proper for a believer to prohibit himself something that God has made lawful. The Prophet had not imposed a legal prohibition on himself with regard to the honey drink he liked or to Mariyah. He only decided to refrain from enjoying either. This gentle reproach makes it clear that it is not right to deliberately deprive oneself of what God has made lawful in order

to appease someone else. The comment at the end of the sign is: *And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(66:1)** This suggests that such deliberate action would require questioning unless it was overlooked by an act of God's forgiveness and grace.

As for the oath that the Quranic text suggests the Messenger made, God stated a way for him to release himself from it. This means that an oath that establishes a situation other than what is best should be atoned for so as to release oneself from it and then take up the better option. *And God is your Defender.* **(66:2)** He helps you to overcome your weaknesses and to cope with what may be hard for you. Therefore, he has ordained for you a way out of your oaths so as to ensure that you do not incur unnecessary hardship. *And He is The Knowing, The Wise.* **(66:2)** He legislates for you on the basis of His absolute knowledge and perfect wisdom. He only commands you to do what is within your power and what is best suited for you. Therefore, do not prohibit yourselves anything other than what He has forbidden, and continue to make lawful only what He has made lawful. It is clear that the comment here fits perfectly with the directive already stated.

The Chapter then refers to what the Prophet said to one of his wives, but mentions neither its subject matter nor its details. None of this is important. What is important, however, is what it signified and the knock-on effects it generated: *And mention when the Prophet confided to one of his spouses a discourse.* **(66:3)** What we are looking at here is something unique in human history. We are looking at a period when there was direct contact between heaven and ordinary people. Here is a direct, public and detailed intervention by heaven in human affairs. God informs the Messenger of a conversation between two of his wives concerning something he had told one of them in confidence. When the Messenger mentioned this to the wife who had divulged it, he only hinted at a certain aspect of it, rather than giving her a detailed account. At the same time, he also informed her of the source of his information: it was the One solid source that could not be mistaken: *She, then, told it to another. God disclosed to him of it. He acquainted her with some of it and turned aside some of it. When he told her about it, she said: Who communicated this to you? He said: The Knowing, The Aware told me.* **(66:3)**

The choice of God's attributes of perfect knowledge and complete awareness of everything particularly suit the conspiratory situation under discussion. Thus, the one who asked the question is reminded of that which she might have forgotten or overlooked. We are all so reminded whenever we read the Quran.

A change of style then follows. The Chapter is no longer report-

ing an incident; it is now addressing the two women involved, as if the matter is taking place at this very moment: *If you two repent to God, the hearts of you both will be bent towards it. And if you helped one another against him, then, truly, God, He is his Defender and Gabriel and ones in accord with morality, the ones who believe. And the angels after that are his sustainers.* **(66:4)** They are, thus, invited to turn to God in repentance after their hearts had swerved from rightful action.

We so realize that the incident had such a profound effect on the Messenger as to require the statement that he is given full protection by God. Furthermore, Gabriel, the believers and all angels stand ready to give him their full support. The Messenger is thus reassured and comforted after this serious breach of confidence. Indeed, the whole situation must have been considered as very serious, implying far-reaching consequences for it to have necessitated such assurances. They felt that the Messenger's own comfort and the maintenance of serenity and peace in his home were more important than anything else. This, then, gives us a clear indication of how the Muslim community viewed these developments, a view in line with how heaven treated it. It is, then, a correct view.

The next sign provides similar import. It details the qualities of the women whom God may give to His Messenger, should he divorce his current wives. This is addressed to all his wives by way of an implicit threat: *Perhaps if he divorced you (f), his Lord will cause in exchange for him spouses better than you (f), ones who submit (f) to One God, ones who believe (f), ones who are morally obligated (f), ones who repent, ones who worship (f), ones who are inclined to fasting (f), women previously married and virgins.* **(66:5)** They are, thus, indirectly called upon to adopt these qualities. The first quality is full submission to God and the fulfilment of all religious obligations. Next, is complete faith that leads to surrendering oneself to God, which is the literal meaning of the Arabic word *islam*. Devotion, the third quality, means conscious obedience of God. The Messenger's wives should also be penitent, which means that they should regret any slip into sin and follow this by turning to do God's bidding. To worship in humility is another quality they should possess. It is the means by which to communicate with God and express our submission to Him. Thoughtful reflection is how we have translated the quality the Chapter that literally means wandering, contemplating. What it means here is that they always reflect on God's creation and contemplate the great universe He has created. Having all these qualities, these new wives would be either virgins or previously married, in the same way as the Messenger married those wives already with

him.

This warning was apparently necessary because of the telling effect their conspiracy had on the Messenger, incurring his anger. He was never given to anger, but the matter was clearly serious. The Messenger felt comforted and reassured when these signs were revealed, addressing him personally as also members of his household. Thereafter, the atmosphere in his blessed home regained its serenity as a direct result of God's statements. This was an honor given to the Prophet and his household, given their important role in the solid implementation of God's code for human life.

We have thus seen a picture of the home life of the man who was entrusted with establishing a nation and a state on hitherto unknown lines. This nation was to be entrusted with the fulfilment of divine faith in its final form. It was to be the practical establishment of a devout society that sets the example for future generations. We see also a picture of a man of exceptional greatness and nobility. Yet, he lived his humanity just as he fulfilled the tasks of his prophethood; the two were intertwined. It was God's will that he should be a human Messenger delivering His last message to humanity, outlining a perfect code for all humanity.

It is a perfect message delivered by a perfect Messenger. One aspect of its perfection is that its every adherent remains a human being: none of his abilities or talents are suppressed or prevented from developing and flourishing. At the same time, it cultivates and educates him so as to attain the highest standard within his power.

Thus has been the method of the Quranic message with those who understood it well and who have molded their lives on the basis of its teachings. They became living examples of it. The Messenger's practical life, with all that it involved of human experience, endeavours, strengths and weaknesses, was intertwined with the divine message. As we see in the case of those who were closest to him and his own family, his life was the practical example of how to live the message. It set the model for those who wish to learn an easy and practical way of implementing God's message. It also steered away from theoretical assumptions that have no practical effect.

God's purpose was thus fulfilled: the final message to humanity was revealed in full, the Messenger who could receive it and give it its practical form was chosen, and his life was left as an open book for all, studied and reviewed by one generation after another.

### A BELIEVER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Now the Chapter addresses the believers enjoining them to fulfil their family duties, providing good education, admonition and re-

minders so that they protect themselves and their families from hell. It provides an image of the fire and how the ungrateful stand before it. In line with the call to those involved in the earlier event to turn to God in repentance, the same call is made to the believers, adding an image of heaven which awaits those who repent of their sins. This second section of the Chapter concludes with a call on the Messenger to strive hard against the ungrateful and the hypocrites:

*O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks over which are angels, harsh, severe who rebel not against whatever God commanded them and they accomplish what they are commanded. O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day. You are only given recompense for what you had been doing.* **(66:6-66:7)**

A believer's responsibility with regard to himself and his family is heavy and awesome. He and his family are liable to punishment in the fire of hell and it is his responsibility to protect himself and his family from such a dreadful fate. It is a terrible fire *whose fuel is humanity and rocks,* **(66:6)** People there are treated in the same way as stones: cheap, abject and thrown away with a total disregard as to what may happen to them. A fire fuelled by stones must blaze fiercely, and a torment that combines its scourge with humiliation compounds the suffering. Everything about it is absolutely terrible: *over which are angels, harsh, severe* so that they suit the punishment they are required to administer: *who rebel not against whatever God commanded them and they accomplish what they are commanded.* **(66:6)** By nature they always obey every command God gives them, and are well able to carry out any such assignment. Possessing such qualities, they are chosen to guard the fire of hell, while every believer is responsible for protecting himself and his family from it. He has to attend to his responsibility now, in this life, before it is too late. When the chance is gone, no excuse is acceptable. The unbelievers will try to present excuses, but they are confronted with the facts that leave them in utter despair: *O those who were ungrateful! Make not excuses this Day. You are only given recompense for what you had been doing.* **(66:7)** That day is not a time for presenting excuses. It is the day when reward and punishment are given. The unbelievers will only take what their own actions incur.

The Quranic message speaks of a faith that takes care of the family. Therefore, it sets certain duties and responsibilities a believer must fulfil with regard to his home and family. The home is the nucleus of the Muslim community. Muslim families are the cells that make up the Muslim society. Every single home is a fortress of faith that must have no flaw in its internal structure. Everyone inside

guards their positions so that no external enemy can infiltrate them. Otherwise, the whole society would be penetrated from within, and so would fall apart should any external attack occur. It is the first duty of a believer to attend to his home and family so that it is internally solid and well guarded. Before he tries to present his message to others, he must close any loophole within.

In this set up, a Muslim mother has an essential role to play; a Muslim father cannot on his own ensure the security of the fortress. Together, the two must cooperate fully in the upbringing of their sons and daughters. A group of men on their own can never succeed in establishing a Muslim society. Indeed, it is women who have a more important role to play in taking care of the new generation and safeguarding the future of the Muslim community. Hence, the Quran addressed both men and women. It set out a system for the Muslim home, placing on believers a clear responsibility for their families, in the same way as they are responsible for themselves:*O those who believed! Protect yourselves and your people from a fire whose fuel is humanity and rocks.* **(66:6)**

Advocates of the Quranic message must be fully aware of this and ensure that they put it into practice. Their first efforts must be addressed to their homes: to their wives and mothers first, and to their children and the rest of their families. Great importance should be attached to the education of the Muslim woman, so that she can make her family home a Muslim home. Anyone who wants his home to be based on the Quranic message must start by choosing a Muslim wife. Otherwise, the formation of a Muslim community will take far too long and its structure will remain weak and flawed.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?

6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Prophet is told to tell the servants of God that God is Forgiving, Compassionate. How will the servants of God be treated in the next life? They will be amidst gardens and springs. They will enter in peace as ones who are safe. God will reward His servants. Those who are the servants of God will receive a great compensation. The consequences for those who are servants of God will be eternal peace. The servants of God will be rewarded.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to do all of the following and, as a result, am beginning to understand my feelings about certain issues.
Raise basic issues to yourself.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of feelings.
Discover the structure of their own thoughts and feelings.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through your own reasoning.

## LESSON 107(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

The development of an attitude of intellectual curiosity is of prime importance in learning how to become a Quranic critical thinker. Quranic thinkers need to be curious about their environment just as Umar al-Khattab had been regarding the conversion of the people around him. What were they listening to? What was Muhammad telling them: Why would my sister and her husband have converted? What is special about this message?.

Critical thinkers need to seek explanations of apparent discrepancies. They need to speculate as to possible causes of these discrepancies. In short, they need to be predisposed to wonder about the world around them. This sense of wonder, this intellectual curiosity that seeks explanations and proffers solutions, is something that can be and needs to be encouraged and developed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 66: THE FORBIDDING (AL-TAHRIM)
## SIGNS 66:8-66:12

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Turn to God for forgiveness*
*remorsefully, faithfully.*
*Perhaps your Lord will absolve you*
*of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens*
*beneath which rivers run.*
*On the Day God will not cover*
*the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him.*
*Their light will hasten about between them and on their right.*
*They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us.*
*Truly,* ***You*** *are Powerful over everything.* (66:8)
*O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful*
*and the ones who are hypocrites*
*and be* ***you*** *harsh against them.*
*And their place of shelter will be hell.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (66:9)
*God propounded an example for those,*
*ones who are ungrateful,*
*like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.*
*They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,*
*ones who are in accord with morality.*
*But they both (f) betrayed them*
*so they avail them not against God at all.*
*And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones who enter.* (66:10)
*And God propounded an example for those who believed:*

*Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said:*
*My Lord, build for me near* ***You*** *a house in the Garden*
*and deliver* ***You*** *me from Pharaoh and his actions*
*and deliver me from the folk,*
*the ones who are unjust.* (66:11)
*And Mary, the daughter of Imran,*
*who guarded her private parts,*
*so We breathed into it of Our Spirit*
*and she established as true the Words of her Lord*
*and His Books and she had been*
*among the ones who are morally obligated.* (66:12)

## COMMENTARY°

*O those who believed! Turn to God for forgiveness remorsefully, faithfully. Perhaps your Lord will absolve you of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run. On the Day God will not cover the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him. Their light will hasten about between them and on their right. They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly,* ***You*** *are Powerful over everything. O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be* ***you*** *harsh against them. And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:8-66:9)**

How are the believers to protect themselves and their families from the fire of hell? The way is mapped out for them, and they are further equipped with great hope: *O those who believed! Turn to God for forgiveness remorsefully, faithfully. Perhaps your Lord will absolve you of your evil deeds and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run. On the Day God will not cover the Prophet with shame and those who believed with him. Their light will hasten about between them and on their right. They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly,* ***You*** *are Powerful over everything.* **(66:8)** The way, then, begins with sincere repentance setting the heart on an honest course that allows no deception. This means genuine regret for past sins and a commitment to do what is good and required. Such repentance is certain to rid a persons heart of any residue sin may leave behind and encourages only what is good. Both qualities are necessary to make the repentance sincere and effective.

When repentance is sincere, it brings with it a hope that God will forgive the repentant their sins and admit them into heaven on the day when the ungrateful are given their humiliating punishment. No disgrace will on that day attach to the Messenger or those who

followed him and accepted his message. This prospect is very tempting as it brings about great honor, with the believers being joined to the Messenger as one group treated with dignity when others are shamed. Furthermore, they are given light that *their light will hasten about between them and on their right.* **(66:8)** Thus they are identified among the great multitude, and they can find their way to their ultimate goal, which is heaven.

In that fearful position when everyone is in the grip of worried anticipation, they are inspired with a humble prayer: *They will say: Our Lord! Fulfill for us our light and forgive us. Truly, You are Powerful over everything.* **(66:8)** The fact that they say such a prayer when the situation makes everyone speechless is a sign that their prayer will be answered. God inspires believers to offer such a prayer only when He will be pleased to answer it. This means that their very prayer is a blessing God bestows on them in addition to the honor and the light already given to them.

How different all this is from the fire fuelled by people and stones! However, both reward and punishment highlight the responsibility of every believer to protect himself and his family from the fire and to place them in a position where they deserve to receive the reward of heaven. In the light of the event that took place in the Prophet's home, we can appreciate the message given in these verses. A believer is responsible for setting his household on the right way, just as he is responsible for ensuring that he purges his heart of sin and follows divine guidance.

### OUR OWN HARD TASK

The situation with the first Muslim community was easier than it is in our present day. A Muslim society was already established in Madinah, where the Quranic message, its vision of a clean, virtuous human life and its laws based on this vision were the driving force. Men and women looked up to God and His Messenger for judgment. When judgment was given, it was accepted as final. In such a society, it was easy for women to mold themselves as the message wanted them to be. Likewise, it was easy for husbands to advise their wives and bring up their children in line with the Quranic system.

We are now in a totally different situation, as we have sunk back into a state of ignorance that influences our society, its laws, morality, traditions, systems, manners and culture. Women find themselves in the midst of this society and feel its crushing pressures as they try to bring their lives in line with the Quranic message, whether on their own initiative or guided by their fathers, husbands or brothers.

In that first Muslim community, the man, the woman and society

all had the same perspective and looked to the same source for judgment. In our own time, the man is looking up to a theoretical abstract while the woman writhes under the heavy pressure of a society that is extremely hostile to her perspective. There is no doubt that the pressures society brings to bear on women are many times greater than its pressure on men.

A Muslim man must realize the size of his responsibility in order to address it properly. This requires that he exert much greater efforts than a Muslim man in the first Muslim community. This is why it is essential for anyone who wants to establish a Muslim home to look first of all for a partner who can guard his fort. She must be a woman who derives her perspective from the same source, the Quranic message. He will have to sacrifice certain things. He must sacrifice superficial attractions that society presents, looking instead for a woman of firm belief who will help him in building a Muslim family. Muslim fathers who want to be part of the Quranic revival must also realize that the new cells in this revival are a trust they must safeguard. It is their task to educate, cultivate and bring them up on the Quranic message before they address their message to anyone else.

Once more we refer to the nature of the Quranic message that requires the establishment of a community that runs its affairs according to the message and gives it a practical presence. The Quranic message is based on the need to establish a community that believes in it and adopts it as a way of life and a code of law. It is from the Quranic message, the complete and perfect system, that this community derives all its concepts and perspectives. Such a community is the fertile soil where the message finds its practical model. Within this community, people look at this model and feel free of the pressures of an non-Quranic society. Moreover, the Muslim community ensures that its members are not subjected to any persecution.

We, thus, see the importance of establishing a Muslim community where Muslim girls and women live, protected from the crushing pressures of the non-Quranic society around them. In such a community they are no longer torn apart by their own Quranic perspective and traditions that are non-Quranic.

It is essential rather than merely desirable for a Quranic community to be established along the lines of its message, adopting its ideas, morality, manners and life concepts and implementing them within its own ranks. Only such a community can safeguard its concepts and values, advocating them in a practical way, seen by all. Thus individuals in an non-Quranic society, who are addressed by the advocates of the message, will look at the Quranic way of life and be motivated to come out of the darkness in which they live and

replace it with the light the Quran provides. Eventually, when God wills that the Quranic message should triumph, new generations will be raised under its care, protected from the ignorance that has long prevailed.

It was to protect the first Muslim community that the command was issued to the Prophet to strive hard against those who take a hostile stand towards it: *O Prophet! Struggle against the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:9)** This is particularly significant in light of the earlier command to the believers to protect themselves and their families against the non-Quranic message. It is also significant in respect of the invitation given to them to sincerely repent of their sins so that their bad deeds are erased and they are admitted into heaven. It highlights the importance of safeguarding the environment where protection from takes place. Thus, oppressive and wicked elements are not allowed to attack the Muslim community whether from outside, as the ungrateful used to do, or from within as the hypocrites did.

In its order to strive hard against the enemies of the Quranic message, the Quranic statement groups together both the ungrateful and the hypocrites because they shared the same mission—the destruction of the Muslim community, or at least its disintegration. To strive against them is, then, the sort of effort that protects from the fire, and to be hard against them is the proper response required of the Prophet and the believers in this present life. As for the life to come: *And their place of shelter will be hell. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(66:9)**

We note that the harmonious tune this second section of the Chapter sings of its message is also in perfect harmony with the first section that dealt with a particular event in the Messenger's own home.

### CONTRASTING EXAMPLES

The final signs of the Chapter sounds as if it is a direct continuation of its first. It speaks of ungrateful women married to Prophets and women believers in the midst of the ungrateful:

God has given examples of unbelievers: Noah's wife and Lot's wife. *God propounded an example for those, ones who are ungrateful like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot. They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants, ones who are in accord with morality. But they both (f) betrayed them so they avail them not against God at all. And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones*

*who enter. And God propounded an example for those who believed: Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said: My Lord, build for me near You a house in the Garden and deliver You me from Pharaoh and his actions and deliver me from the folk, the ones who are unjust. And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* **(66:10-66:12)**

Reports speaking of the betrayal of Noah and Lot by their wives suggest that it was a betrayal of their messages, rather than their being unfaithful to their marriage bonds. Noah's wife used to join the ungrateful in his community in making fun of him, while Lot's wife used to inform his people when he received guests, knowing what they tried to do with such visitors.

Similarly, reports concerning Pharaoh's wife make it clear that she lived in his palace as a believer in God Almighty, and suggest that she was of Asian origin following a divine religion that was revealed before the time of Moses.

Having made an order to believers to protect themselves and their families from incurring punishment in hell, the Chapter now highlights the principle of individual responsibility. The Prophet's wives, and indeed wives of all believers, are told here that ultimately they are personally accountable for what they do and the decisions they make. Their individual responsibility cannot be waived merely because they are married to a Prophet or to a devout believer. *God propounded an example for those, ones who are ungrateful like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot. They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants, ones who are in accord with morality. But they both (f) betrayed them so they avail them not against God at all. And it was said: Enter the fire along with ones who enter.* **(66:10)** When the question is one of belief or ingratitude, or one of betrayal of faith, there can be no special privilege for anyone, not even for Messenger's wives.

Pharaoh's wife gives the perfect contrast. She was living in the midst of sweeping ingratitude, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all connection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it: *Deliver You me from Pharaoh and his actions* **(66:11)** She disowned Pharaoh's

people while at the same time living in their midst: *And deliver me from the folk, the ones who are unjust* **(66:11)**

The prayer of Pharaoh's wife and her overall position is a shining example of rejecting all temptation that the life of this world can offer, even at its most splendid. Pharaoh was the most powerful king on earth, and his palace offered the best that a woman could desire. Yet his wife chose faith in preference to all this. She did not merely treat it with contempt; she considered it evil and sought refuge with God from yielding to it, praying to be saved from it and its consequences. Yet Pharaoh's wife was a woman standing on her own in the midst of a great kingdom, which makes her all the more admirable and gives her an even greater position. As we have stated earlier, women are more sensitive and responsive to social pressures. However, this woman, on her own, resisted the pressures exerted by society, the palace, the throne, the courtiers and her own royal position, lifting her head to heaven seeking its light. She certainly provides a great example of submission to God, resisting all temptations and overcoming all impediments. Hence she deserved her special mention in God's book, the words of which are echoed throughout the universe as they are revealed from on high.

*And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* **(66:12)** Thus, her innocence is made absolutely clear, refuting any vile accusations against her: *So We breathed into it of Our Spirit.* **(66:12)** It was from this breathing of God's spirit into her that Jesus, her son, was born, as detailed in Chapter 19, Mary. We will not go into the details of his birth here, limiting ourselves only to the discussion of the present text which highlights Mary;s purity, complete faith and total obedience of God: *And she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* **(66:12)**

The fact that Pharaoh's wife is the one chosen to be mentioned here together with Mary is indicative of her own sublime status; a status enhanced by the special circumstances of her own life. Both women are splendid examples of women who combined firm faith with purity of behavior and total devotion. God sets these two examples for the Messenger's own wives in the context of the event reported in the first section of the Chapter. They are also examples set before believing women in all generations.

This Chapter gives us a glimpse of the Messenger's own life, drawn in the inspiring style of the Quran. No human report speaking of the period can give us a similar picture. This because Quranic expressions are more inspiring and far-reaching. In this way, a single

event is cited to state the truth that remains valid for the rest of time.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is(are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is(are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran reiterates that the Hour is that which will come. How does the Quranic message tell the Prophet to behave towards the ungrateful? Be graciously forgiving of them as their fate rests with God. The fate of everyone is in the hands of God. We are not responsible for the actions of others. We are each responsible for our own actions. The Hour will come.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I don't waste time. All people waste some time; that is, fail to use all of their time productively or even pleasurably.
Sometimes I jump from one diversion to another, without enjoying any of them.
Sometimes I become irritated about matters beyond my control.
Sometimes I fail to plan well causing me negative consequences I could easily have avoided (for example, I spend time unnecessarily trapped in tr[illegible] I could have left a half hour
Sometimes Ie w
Sometimes I sp
Sometimes I ju

## LESSON 108(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY GENERATING PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE

One of the goals of the Quran is for encourage the oneness of humanity. Others are: to break the bonds of ignorance, missed guidance, social and moral corruption. These are all considered to be shadows or darknesses. When these bonds are broken, the Quran guides humanity to goodness, light and being fair and just.

You begin developing your reasoning or discernment faculty by understanding what this particular element of thought or reasoning is. That is, you learn to generate the purpose, aim, goal or objective of the Quranic signs and their message.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 64: THE MUTUAL LOSS AND GAIN (AL-TAGHABUN)

### SIGNS 64:1-64:10

**Madinah:** *Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*His is the dominion and to Him belongs all the praise.*
*And He is Powerful over everything.* (64:1)
*He it is Who created you:*
*So some of you are ones who disbelieve*
*and some of you are ones who believe.*
*And God is Seeing of what you do.* (64:2)
*He created the heavens and the earth*
*with The Truth and He formed you*
*and formed your forms well.*
*And to Him is the Homecoming!* (64:3)
*He knows what is in the heavens and the earth*
*and He knows what you keep secret*
*and what you speak openly.*
*And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (64:4)
*Approaches you not the tiding*
*of those who were ungrateful before?*
*They experienced the mischief of their affair*
*and there is a painful punishment for them.* (64:5)
*That had been because their Messengers approach them*
*with the clear portents, but they said:*
*Will mortals guide us?*
*So they were ungrateful and turned away.*
*And God is Self-Sufficient.*
*And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise.* (64:6)
*Those who were ungrateful claimed*

*that they will never be raised up.*
*Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up.*
*Again, you will be told of what you did.*
*And that is easy for God.* (64:7)
*So believe in God and His Messenger,*
*and in the Light *
*which We caused to descend.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (64:8)
*On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering,*
*that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain,*
*and whoever believes in God*
*and does as one in accord with morality,*
*He will absolve him of his evil deeds*
*and He will cause him to enter Gardens*
*beneath which rivers run*
*as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.*
*That will be winning the sublime triumph.* (64:9)
*But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,*
*those are the Companions of the Fire,*
*ones who will dwell in it forever.*
*And miserable will be the Homecoming!* (64:10)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

The signs from the beginning up to the direct address to the believers in **(64:14)** aim to establish the foundations of faith and to instil the Quranic message. It addresses the ungrateful directly, presenting its theme to them. It uses universal and psychological effects and portrays images of the destruction of earlier communities that denied God's messages. It also presents images of the Day of Judgment, emphatically confirming resurrection. This indicates that the addressees denied it altogether.

The last signs, from **(64:14-64:18)**, address the believers in a manner similar to that used in Chapters revealed in Madinah, urging them to spend their money in the service of God's cause, and warning them against failure in the test that their riches and children represent. Similar addresses can be found in many Chapters of the Madinah period, and this because of the problems faced by the fledgling Muslim community there. This address also includes a comforting aspect to help the Muslims bear with patience any reversals, calamities or burdens; all these are attributed to God's will. This is the concept these Chapters seek to confirm, particularly after the command given to the Muslim community to fight for God's cause and what this in-

volves of sacrifice.

### THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION

The first section of the Chapter **(64:1-64:10)** aims to establish the proper concept of the universe based on faith, present the true bond between the Creator and the universe He has created, and mention some of God's names and attributes as well as their effect on the universe and on human life:

All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extol the limitless glory of God; all sovereignty belongs to Him and all praise is due to Him. He has power over all things. It is He who has created you, yet some of you are ungrateful and some do believe. God sees all that you do. He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the truth, and fashioned you, giving you a comely appearance. To Him all shall return. He knows what is in the heavens and the earth; and He knows what you conceal and what you reveal. God has full knowledge of the secrets of all hearts. **(64:1-64:4)**

This concept is one hundred per cent accurate. It depicts what believers have always known and followed. All divine messages have preached the concept of God's Oneness and His creation of everything in the universe. They all make it clear that God takes care of everyone and everything in the universe. We have no doubt about this, since the Quran confirms the same about all God's Messengers and the messages they advocated. Therefore, we pay little attention to what we find today in distorted scriptures or to what is written on comparative religion by people who do not believe in the Quran, in whole or in part. Deviation from the true divine faith is the result of what has been introduced by some followers of these messages, giving the appearance that they did not preach the pure concept of God's Oneness, or that God is not in full control and direct contact with every creature. All this is deviation and does not belong to the original form of any divine religion, which remains the same from the first to the last of God's messages. It is impossible that God should have sent down a religion that is in conflict with these essential principles, as alleged by scriptures that have been distorted.

This pure concept allows the human mind to understand, as best as it can, the true nature of Godhead, feel the power of the Almighty, and recognize it in everything we see in the universe. We can thus see the work of this supreme power within ourselves, live within its scope, and appreciate its effects that cannot be removed from our senses or our minds. We see it encompassing everything, conducting all affairs, controlling all events, taking care of all. Nothing escapes it, small or large, trivial or important. This means that the human

heart will always be highly sensitive, truly alert, entertaining feelings of apprehension and expectation, fear and hope. Thus the human being goes about life, looking up to God with every move and every action, feeling His power and realizing that He sees all, watches all and controls all. Yet He is also ever merciful to all and bestows His grace on everyone and in all situations.

Moreover, this concept enables us to feel that the entire universe turns to its Lord. So, we turn with the universe and join it in extolling God's limitless glory. We realize that the whole universe is controlled by God's will, subject to His wisdom, and so we submit to His law. This is why we describe it as a universal concept of faith. Its universality is emphasized in a variety of ways throughout the Quran.

### GOD'S LIMITLESS POWER

*Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God and whatever is in and on the earth. His is the dominion and to Him belongs all the praise.* **(64:1)** Everything in the heavens and the earth turns towards their Lord, extolling His limitless glory and praising Him. The heart of this universe is a believing heart, and the soul of everything that exists is a believer. God owns all, and they all know this truth. God is praised in Himself, glorified by all His creation. When the alone stands in the midst of this great universe rebelling against the truth, cold-hearted, spiritless, turning away from his Lord and Master, refusing to glorify Him, he is at odds with all, discarded by all.

*And He is Powerful over everything.* **(64:1)** His is absolute, limitless and unrestricted power. The Quran impresses this truth on every believer's heart. As the believer recognizes its significance, he knows that placing his trust in God alone means that he relies on the power that can do and achieve everything, without limit or restriction. This understanding of God's power and His glorification and praise by all that exists is part of the universal concept of faith that the Quranic message formulates.

The second point penetrates deep into the human heart. It is the human being alone who stands in the midst of the universe in two states of belief and unbelief, while all the universe believes in its Creator, and extols His limitless glory and praise: *He it is Who created you: So some of you are ones who disbelieve and some of you are ones who believe.* **(64:2)** It is by God's will and through His power that the human being was originated. He gave him the ability to turn to or away from faith. Thus, the human being is distinguished among God's creation by this dual ability. Therefore, he is assigned the great trust and momentous responsibility of faith. God has honored this creature by giving him the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood;

furthermore, the choice is up to him. He has also given him the standard by which he can evaluate his own actions and determine his way. This standard is the religion God revealed to human Messengers. In this way, God has helped the human being to shoulder the trust assigned to him, depriving him of nothing that he needs. *And God is Seeing of what you do.* **(64:2)** He watches a person's actions, knows his true intentions and the direction he takes. Let the human being, then, go about life alert to the fact that he is watched by the One who sees all. This concept of human nature is part of the clear and straightforward Quranic concept of the human being's position in the universe, as well as his abilities and responsibilities towards the Creator of the universe.

The third point emphasizes the truth that is inherent in the nature of the universe and which ensures the proper functioning of the heavens and the earth. It also highlights the fine beauty of God's creation as seen in the creation of the human being. It also makes it clear that all creatures will ultimately return to Him: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth and He formed you and formed your forms well.* **(64:3)**

The first sentence in this sign: *He created the heavens and the earth with The Truth* implants in a believer's mind that the truth is firmly established in the very foundation of this universe. It is neither transitory nor incidental. The very structure of the universe is founded on this basis. This is stated by none other than God who created the heavens and the earth and knows what foundation He has given them. When this fact is firmly settled in our consciousness, it gives us total reassurance about the basis of our faith. It is the same truth that serves as the foundation of the universe. This means that this faith must inevitably triumph, and must remain pure and well established. Whatever else is false and will certainly be swept away.

Another fact is stated in the same sign: *And He formed you and formed your forms well.* This gives a person the feeling that he has special privilege with God who has bestowed on him the blessing of a comely appearance, both physically and spiritually. The human being is the most perfected creature on earth in respect of his physical constitution and his spiritual qualities, which also entails marvellous secrets. Therefore, he has been placed in charge of the earth, which is a vast area by human standards. A careful glance at the human being's general physical constitution, or at any of his physical systems, is sufficient to portray this fact most clearly: *And He formed you and formed your forms well.* It is an appearance that combines beauty and perfection. The beauty varies between one physical form and another, but the design itself is so beautiful and so well executed,

that it enables all functions and qualities that distinguish the human being above all other living creatures to work together perfectly.

*And to Him is the Homecoming!* **(63:3)** Every thing, situation and creature will return to Him. The ultimate destiny of the universe and with it the ultimate destiny of the human being is with Him. It is from His will that they originated and to Him they will return. He is the First and the Last who holds everything from its both ends, the beginning and the end. He, in His limitless glory, is not restricted by anything.

The fourth point in the opening section of the Chapter describes God's perfect knowledge that includes all and everything. He is fully aware of what the human being declares and what he conceals, and knows what is even more deeply hidden than the deepest and closest of secrets. He knows what people entertain deep in their hearts: *He knows what is in the heavens and the earth and He knows what you keep secret and what you speak openly. And God is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* **(64:4)** When this fact is firmly established in the human mind it gives him a better knowledge of his Lord, contributing to his concept of the universe. It influences his feelings. He leads his life fully aware that God knows all there is to know about him, including his most secret thoughts and unexpressed feelings.

The three signs that follow the first are enough to enable a person to live with the full awareness of the truth of his existence and that of the universe around him. He will also be aware of the bond he has with his Lord, how he should behave towards Him and how to fear Him in every situation in which he finds himself.

### THE OBJECTIONS OF THE UNGRATEFUL

The next signs remind us of the fate of earlier communities that denied God's messages and the signs He gave them. They objected to the fact that God assigned His messages to human Messengers, in the same way as the idolaters in Makkah objected to the Prophet Muhammad and denied all the clear proof he put before them:

*Approaches you not the tiding of those who were ungrateful before? They experienced the mischief of their affair and there is a painful punishment for them. That had been because their Messengers approach them with the clear portents, but they said: Will mortals guide us? So they were ungrateful and turned away. And God is Self-Sufficient. And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise.* **(64:5-64:6)**

The addressees here are, most probably, the ungrateful. They are reminded of the fates suffered by earlier communities who denied the truth, and warned against a similar fate. The interrogative form is adopted either as a denunciation of their stubbornness after they

have been given such information or it is used to draw their attention to this same history that relates to them. They were fully aware of what happened to some of these communities, such as the Aad, Thamud and the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah. In fact, they passed by them in their trips to the north and south of Arabia.

The Quran mentions their fate in this life and states what awaits them in the life to come: *And there is a painful punishment for them.* **(64:5)** It then explains why they deserved what happened to them and what they are still to face: *That had been because their Messengers approach them with the clear portents, but they said: Will mortals guide us?* **(64:6)** It is the same objection voiced by the Makkan idolaters to the Prophet. It is an arrogant objection that betrays a total ignorance of the nature of the divine message and its being a code to be implemented in human life. Therefore, it must be practically represented in a human being, in the Messenger who lives according to it and presents a model of its implementation. Thus, others will then be able to mold their own lives in the same way, and to the best of their abilities. Were the Messenger to belong to any other than the human race, people would not have had a practical example against which to mold their feelings and lives. Moreover, this objection betrays ignorance of the true nature of the human being and his elevated status, which enables him to receive and deliver a divine message instead of God assigning it to an angel, as the ungrateful frequently suggested. The human being carries the spirit of God breathed into him when God first created Adam. This prepares him to receive God's message and to deliver it complete as he receives it from on high. This is an honor bestowed on the human race, rejected only by those who are ignorant of the high status God gives to the human being when, within his own personal world, he gives full effect to this breath of God's spirit in him. Furthermore, the objection reflects the arrogance and false pride of those who refuse to follow a human Messenger, as if such following would detract from the status of those ignorant, arrogant ungrateful. To them, it is acceptable to follow a Messenger who belongs to a different kind of creature, but to follow one from their own ranks is too unbecoming.

Therefore, they disbelieved in God's Messengers and turned away from them, rejecting the clear proofs and signs that they brought them. Their pride, combined with their ignorance of human nature, stood as a barrier preventing them from accepting the truth. Thus, they chose to turn away from God's guidance and to disbelieve in Him. *So they were ungrateful and turned away.* **(64:6)**

*And God is Self-Sufficient. And God is Rich, Worthy of Praise.* **(64:6)** He does not need that they should accept His guidance, nor

does He need their worship. Indeed, He needs nothing from them or from anyone else. He is free of all need.

Such is the story of those who in earlier times denied God's messages and were made to taste the fruits of their ingratitude. It also explains the reasons behind what happened to them and what awaits them in the life to come. How can present generations follow in their footsteps and deny the truth now? How can they risk a similar fate?

### The Truth of Resurrection

The next signs carry the theme of the previous one further, stating the situation of those ungrateful who deny the resurrection. It is clearly apparent that these were the idolaters whom the Prophet addressed, calling on them to believe in his message. This section instructs the Prophet to confirm, most emphatically, to them that the resurrection will certainly take place. Indeed, it adds a scene from the Day of Judgment that depicts the fates of the two groups who either deny or accept it. It calls on them to believe, obey and attribute everything that happens in the world to God Almighty:

The ungrateful allege that they will not be raised from the dead. *Those who were ungrateful claimed that they will never be raised up. Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up. Again, you will be told of what you did. And that is easy for God. So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend. And God is Aware of what you do. On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering, that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain, and whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will absolve him of his evil deeds and He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That will be winning the sublime triumph. But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs, those are the Companions of the Fire, ones who will dwell in it forever. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(64:7-64:10)**

Right from the start the Chapter describes the argument of the ungrateful as an allegation, thereby branding it as a lie. It follows this with a directive to the Prophet to assert his message of resurrection most emphatically, swearing by his Lord to its truth. Nothing can be more emphatic than an oath the Messenger makes by his Lord. *Those who were ungrateful claimed that they will never be raised up. Say: Yea! By my Lord, you will, certainly, be raised up. Again, you will be told of what you did.* **(64:7)** Nothing of it will suffer neglect. God knows their deeds better than they do, so He will tell them all about it on the Day of Resurrection. *And that is easy for God.* He knows all that is in the heavens and the earth, open and secret, as

well as what is in people's hearts, expressed or otherwise. He also has power over all things, as stated earlier in the Chapter.

The Chapter then calls on them to believe in God and His Messenger, and in the light He has given His Messenger, which is the Quran and the faith embodied in the Quran. It is indeed light, since it comes from God, and *God is the light of the heavens and the earth.* **(24: 35)** The Quran enlightens the heart to make it shine, able to see the truth inherent within it: *So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend.* **(64:8)** This call on them to believe is followed by a comment that makes them realize that their situation is fully observed by God: *And God is Aware of what you do.* **(64:8)**

The next sign continues to draw the scene of the Day of Resurrection: *On a Day when He will amass you for the Day of Gathering, that will be the day of the mutual loss and gain, and whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will absolve him of his evil deeds and He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run as ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That will be winning the sublime triumph.* **(64:9)** It is called the Day of the Gathering because all creatures from all generations are gathered together on that day, which is also attended by the angels. Only God knows the numbers of the angels. The heaven in which there is an angel in every little space of four fingers is this great expanse for which we know no limit, and in which a sun like ours appears to be no more than a fine particle floating in the air. Does this then give us an approximation for the number of angels in it? Furthermore, all these angels will form part of the assembled mass of creatures on the Day of Gathering.

It will be in front of this great assembly that the loss and gain will take place: the believers will take all happiness purely for themselves while the ungrateful will be totally deprived of it before being sent to hell. These are two greatly different lots. The sense we receive is that of a competition where the winners take all. Therefore, each side wants to deprive its competitors. The believers end up winners and the ungrateful, losers. This is what is meant by mutual loss and gain, as explained in the same sign and that which follows: *But for those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs, those are the Companions of the Fire, ones who will dwell in it forever. And miserable will be the Homecoming!* **(64:10)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

**Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works**

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran tells the Prophet to say to the people that he was commanded to be the first who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God. He was not among the polytheists, the ungrateful who worshipped more gods than there are. There is only One God and a Muslim is one who submits to the One God. To submit means that one does not rebel against God's will. To submit to the One God is to be saved. That Muhammad was commanded to be the first one [among you] who submitted (*muslim*) to the One God.

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions:

Am I clear about what precisely I am evaluating?;
Am I clear about my purpose? Is my purpose legitimate?
Given my purpose, what are the relevant criteria or standards for evaluation?
Do I have sufficient information about that which I am evaluating?
Is that information relevant to the purpose?
Have I applied my criteria accurately and fairly to the facts as I know them?
Uncritical thinkers often treat evaluation as mere preference or treat their evaluative judgments as direct observations not admitting of error.

## LESSON 108(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS

When there is a clear question stated about an issue in a Quranic sign, it is important for Quranic critical thinkers to first recognize what is needed to answer, settle or solve it and then evaluate solutions or conclusions. In other words, before you can agree with or disagree with a statement, you must clearly understand it. Quranic critical thinkers first understand the sign(s) and then make a discerning judgment. They then are able to ask the appropriate questions that would lead to understanding and evaluating the situation.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 64: THE MUTUAL LOSS AND GAIN (AL-TAGHABUN)

SIGNS 64:11-64:18

**Madinah:** *No affliction hit but with the permission of God.*
*Whoever believes in God, He guides his heart.*
*And God is Knowing of everything.* (64:11)
*And obey God and obey the Messenger.*
*Then, if you turned away,*
*then, it is only for Our Messenger*
*the delivering the clear message.* (64:12)
*God, there is no god but He.*
*And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* (64:13)
*O those who believed!*
*Truly, there are among your spouses and your children*
*enemies for you, so beware of them.*
*And if you would pardon, overlook and forgive,*
*then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (64:14)
*Your wealth and your children are only a test.*
*And God, with Him is a sublime compensation.* (64:15)
*So be God-conscious as much as you were able*
*and hear and obey and spend.*
*That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected*
*from his own stinginess,*
*then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* (64:16)
*If you lend to God a fairer loan,*
*He will multiply it for you and will forgive you.*
*And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing.* (64:17)
*One Who Knows the unseen and the visible,*
*The Almighty, The Wise.* (64:18)

### COMMENTARY°

Before completing the call to them to believe, the Chapter states

one of the main elements of the Quranic message, which is to believe in God's will and the effect of belief in God on the human heart: *No affliction lit but with the permission of God. Whoever believes in God, He guides his heart. And God is Knowing of everything.* **(64:11)**

Perhaps this fact is stated here only to put it clearly within the context of the faith they are called upon to adopt. It is a belief that attributes everything to God, and whatever good or evil takes place occurs only by God's will. This is an essential fact without which faith is incomplete. It is indeed the basis of all feelings a believer may have when facing life events and situations, good and happy or bad and miserable. On the other hand, this fact is stated here in response to something that took place and was clear in people's minds at the time of the revelation of this Chapter or this sign. Regardless of the exact situation, this fact represents an important aspect of the concept the Quran implants in a believer's consciousness. He thus feels God's hand behind every event and every move. He receives with a calm heart whatever happens to him, whether it brings him happiness or adversity. He expresses his gratitude in the first case and demonstrates patience in the second. Alternatively, he may rise to a higher level, expressing his thanks to God in both cases of happiness and adversity, feeling that both bring him God's blessings. He then sees adversity as a reminder for him or an occasion that may bring him forgiveness of past sins or an increase in his reward.

*He guides his heart.* **(64:11)** Some commentators explain this as meaning belief in God's will and being resigned to it in the event of facing a calamity. This statement has been taken as indicating complete guidance granted to believing hearts, making them recognize the absolute truth. Thus they attribute all things and all events to God, their source and goal. This provides them with reassurance and comfort. With such a complete and comprehensive vision, they are not encumbered by a partial view that may be deficient or erroneous. Therefore, the comment at the end of the sign: *And God is Knowing of everything.* **(64:11)** It is, then, guidance to a share of God s knowledge. God grants this guidance to a person who truly believes, thus earning the prize of knowing something of what lies beyond this limited human life.

The Chapter continues with its call on people to believe, calling them now to obey God and His Messenger: *And obey God and obey the Messenger. Then, if you turned away, then, it is only for Our Messenger the delivering the clear message.* **(64:12)** The Chapter has already shown them the end suffered by earlier communities who turned away. Now it tells them that the role of God's Messenger is only to deliver His message. When he has done this, he has fulfilled

the trust assigned to him and put the proof before them. What remains is the fate merited by those who are stubborn in disobedience and rejection. They have already been reminded of this.

This next sign restates the truth of God's Oneness, which they persistently deny. It also states the believers' attitude in dealing with God: *God, there is no god but He. And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(64:13)** The truth of God's Oneness is the essence of faith. Its practical import is to place ones total trust in God and to rely on Him alone. This sign provides a bridge between these sections of the Chapter and its final one which comes as an address to the believers.

### SPOUSES AND CHILDREN AS ENEMIES

In the final section the Chapter addresses the believers, warning them against failure in the test represented in the temptation spouses, children and riches offer. They are required to remain God-conscious, be obedient to Him and give willingly for His cause. They are warned against being stingy. They are further promised the doubling of their provisions, forgiveness of their sins and success. They are finally reminded of God s all-encompassing knowledge, power and wisdom:

*O those who believed! Truly, there are among your spouses and your children enemies for you, so beware of them. And if you would pardon, overlook and forgive, then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate. Your wealth and your children are only a test. And God, with Him is a sublime compensation. So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper. If you lend to God a fairer loan, He will multiply it for you and will forgive you. And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing, One Who Knows the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Wise.* **(64:14-64:18)**

The Quranic statement is wider in scope and import than this particular situation represents. For this warning is the same as that in the following sign: *Your wealth and your children are only a test. And God, with Him is a sublime compensation.* **(64:15)** Both caution against the temptation that wives, children and wealth present. The warning that some spouses and children may be one's enemies refers to a true fact in human life. In this way, the signs touch upon some intricate and complex ties in human emotions and how they are influenced by life's circumstances. Spouses and children may divert a person's attention from God's remembrance. They may also make a man fall short of discharging the responsibilities required of his faith; this in order to spare himself the troubles that he may face as a result

of fulfilling such responsibilities. A person who strives for God's cause may be exposed to much loss and may have to sacrifice a great deal. He and his family may have to withstand much hardship. He may be willing to face such hardship himself, but cannot bear that such hardship be suffered by his wife and children. As a result, he may be tight-fisted and cowardly in order to ensure that they are safe, free of trouble and financially secure. Thus, they become his enemies as they turn him away from doing what is good and stop him from fulfilling the ultimate objective of his existence. Indeed, they may even stand in his way, stopping him from fulfilling his duty. In doing so, they may wish to spare themselves what may happen as a result, or they may not share his belief. In this way, a person finds himself unable to separate himself from them and dedicate himself to God's cause. This is also a form of enmity that may vary in degrees. Furthermore, such situations are faced by believers at all times.

This very complex situation merits such a caution from God as to alert believers' hearts so that they do not allow such feelings and pressures to creep into their minds. The caution is stated again, this time as a warning against the temptation presented by wealth and children. The Arabic word used here conveys two meanings. The first is trial, which makes the sign mean that God puts you to trial by giving you riches and children. He tests you in this way, so always be on the alert in order to pass your test and dedicate yourself to God. The second meaning is temptation, and in this sense the sign means that riches and children present temptations for you to indulge in sin. Beware then and do not allow such temptations to distract you from the way that leads to God's acceptance. Both meanings are acceptable.

The believers are admonished to do their best to remain God-fearing and to obey God's orders: *So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves, and whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(64:16)** Here we see an aspect of God's care as He restricts what is expected of the believers to that which remains within their power and ability. He knows the limit of what they can do in obedience of Him. Limits cannot be set on obeying an order to do something. Therefore, what is within ones ability and power is sufficient. On the other hand, prohibition cannot be divided. It is required in full.

They are also called upon to be generous in what they donate: *So be God-conscious as much as you were able and hear and obey and spend. That is good for yourselves.* **(64:16)** Normally, they spend their money on their own needs. God instructs them to spend in char-

ity what is good for themselves. Thus, when they are charitable, they are actually spending their money on what is good for themselves. The Chapter also depicts meanness as a plague, one they must try to get rid of. He is happy who manages to achieve this: *And whoever is protected from his own stinginess, then, those, they are the ones who prosper.* **(64:16)**

The Chapter goes on encouraging them to be charitable, making it desirable for them. It describes such charity as a loan given to God. Who would want to lose the opportunity to give his Master a loan? God accepts the loan, repays it many times over, forgives the lender his sins, thanks the lender and forbears with him when he falls short of thanking Him: *If you lend to God a fairer loan, He will multiply it for you and will forgive you. And God is Ready to Appreciate, Forbearing,* **(64:17)** Blessed be God's name: how generous and great He is! It is He who creates the human being, His servant, and then gives him all his provisions. He then asks him to give him as a loan some of what is surplus to his needs. He repays this loan in multiples and thanks His servant and forbears when His servant is not as grateful to Him as he should be.

God thus teaches us how to rise above our weaknesses and shortcomings and how to aspire to the sublime, trying to be like Him, albeit within our limited abilities. God has breathed of His spirit into the human being, so that the human being will always aspire to achieve this ideal, within the scope of his nature and ability. Therefore, the sublime remains open for the human being always to aspire to. He can try to rise step after step so that he can meet God presenting what He likes him to present and what earns him His pleasure.

The section then concludes with a statement of God's knowledge and wisdom: *One Who Knows the unseen and the visible, The Almighty, The Wise.* **(64:18)** Everything is within His knowledge, subject to His power, conducted according to His wisdom. As they go through life, people should realize that they remain under God's watchful eye, are subject to His power, and that everything takes place by His will. When this truth is appreciated by people, they will remain God-fearing and respond to Him only as they should.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message tells the ungrateful what the result of their denying the signs of God will be. What is the result of the ungrateful's denial of the signs of God? On the Day of Judgment, the ungrateful will wish that they could be returned to this life in order to accept the signs of God. When before their Lord, they would admit that the Quran is stating the Truth. It would be too late to avoid the punishment. Those who deny the Last Day will not be returned to this life to change their ways and even if they were to be returned to this life, they still would not believe. The Day of Judgment is the Day when each person will be judged for what they did. Those who deny the Day of Judgment in this life will be punished in the next life. There will be a Day of Judgment.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thoroughly understand the requirements of the Quranic Studies class, how it is taught and what is expected of me.

I was able to ask questions about the grading policies and for advice on how best to prepare for class?

I feel I was an active learner?

I was able to work ideas into my thinking by active reading, writing, speaking, and listening?

## INTERLUDE

### THE VISITATION (*UMRA*) TO MAKKAH

After Khaybar, the Messenger stayed in Madinah Rabi 1, Rabi 2, Jumada 1, Jumada 2, Rajab, Shaban, Ramadan and Shawwal. In Dhu al-Qada, he left for the Visitation or Lesser Pilgrimage (*umra*).

One of the articles of the Treaty of Hudaybiah had stated that the Muslims would be allowed to go to Makkah the next year. Thus on Monday 6th Dhu al-Qada 7 AH, the Messenger left Madinah for Makkah with the group that had gone with him the year before.

The Messenger had signed a treaty with the ungrateful that no arms would be carried except those needed by a traveler. Yet, he is not sure of the intentions of the enemy. It could be a trap. In order to prepare for any occurrence, he assigned one of his officers, Muhammad ibn Musaylimah, with 200 cavalry to move ahead of the caravan, to stop near the sacred area and to await the arrival of the Messenger's caravan. The ungrateful spies saw where the armed men stop. They informed their leaders.

A representative of the ungrateful contacted the Messenger and said that what he had done is in opposition to the Peace Treaty. The Messenger says: My Companions and I have not acted against the Treaty. These 200 men will remain here.

The ungrateful realized that this army would wait for the Messenger to return, but if anything happened to the Messenger while in Makkah, they would come to his aid. The ungrateful opened the doors of Makkah to the Messenger. The ungrateful left the city with their families and went to the surrounding mountains so as not to see the Messenger or be influenced by his message.

Astride a camel, the Messenger entered Makkah with 2000 people. The sounds of: Lord! Here I am! Here I am! fill the streets of Makkah. Then the poet Abd Allah ibn Rawahah recited a poem: O children of the ungrateful! Open the way for the Messenger of God. Know that he is the source of goodness and it is good to accept his creed. My Creator believes in him and it is the right of God that you accept his creed. One day we will strike such a blow against you that you will not recover from it.

While astride the camel, the Messenger circumambulated the House of God. He commanded Abd Allah to tell the people to recite the following: There is no god but God. He is One and Self-sufficient. His promise has been fulfilled. He has helped His servants. He has brought victory to his soldiers. The Confederacy of the ungrateful has been defeated.

This prayer of unity is recited by 2000 people on that day which caused the most demoralizing effect upon the soldiers of paganism. They realized that the Quranic message would be most certainly actualized throughout the Hijaz. At noon, Bilal, who had suffered such torture for his beliefs, called out the ritual prayer in a powerful voice. His voice so disconcerted the pagans who were hiding in the mountains that many fell ill. After seven years of being de-

prived of the pilgrimage to God's House, they finally attained their wish and a pilgrimage for the One God, at that. The Messenger commanded 200 people who had performed their shorter pilgrimage to return to where the soldiers were waiting and take over for them so they could come to Makkah for the pilgrimage.

The ungrateful were very unhappy seeing that the Messenger had gained so much by signing the Treaty and that he even threatened them. Because of this, the ungrateful sent men to the Messenger telling him to leave Makkah even before the time they had been given permission to stay had ended.

### MARRIAGE TO MAYMUNA BINT AL-HARITH AFTER *UMRA*

In the evening, Abu Rafi, carrying Maymuna with him, reached the same place, and the marriage was there consummated. Early next morning, the march was resumed, and the cortege returned to Madinah. Maymuna is said to have been at this time fifty. She survived thirty years, was buried on the spot on which she had celebrated her marriage with the Prophet. He now had ten wives, besides two POW/slaves or concubines. But Zaynab bint Khuzayma died before him; the number consequently was then reduced to nine, or, including POW/concubines, to eleven.

The Messenger brought with him to Madinah his bride's sister, Salma, a widow, and Umara, her unmarried daughter. Jafar, Ali, and Zayd ibn Harith, each contending for the honor of receiving Umara into his family, the Messenger decided in favor of Jafar, because he was married to her aunt.

Another sister of Maymuna was the mother of Khalid ibn Walid, the famous warrior who had turned the tide of the battle at Uhud against the Muslims. Not long after the marriage of his aunt to the Prophet, Khalid went to Madinah and accepted the Quranic message. Two others followed him. One, his friend Amru (ibn al Aas), whose poetic talents had often been used for the annoyance and injury of the Messenger. He was a man of weight in the councils of the ungrateful, and bad been employed by them in their embassy to Abyssinia. The other was Uthman, son of Talha, a chief of some note, and (as successor to the Hijaz) custodian of the Kabah. He had, no doubt, in that capacity, attended on the late occasion with the keys of his office to give the Messenger admittance to the holy Kabah; and, perhaps, like many others, who gazed from a respectful distance on that memorable scene, was gained over by the earnest devotion of the Messenger to the national shrine, and by the elevation and beauty of the services which he there performed.

The position of the Messenger at Makkah was greatly strengthened by the accession of such leading men. The balance was already

wavering: it required little to throw it entirely on the side of the Quranic message. To what extent persons of less note and influence about this time came over to Madinah, or remaining at Makkah declared in favor of the Messenger, is not told to us. But there can be no doubt that the movement was not confined to Khalid, and Uthman, but was wide and general.

His visit to Makkah enabled the Messenger to see and estimate the growth of his own influence there, upon the one hand, and the waning power and spirit of the ungrateful, upon the other. The citizens of Makkah were weary of intestine war and bloodshed. The advocates of peace and co promise were growing in numbers and in confidence. Among the ungrateful there were no chiefs of marked ability or commanding influence. A bold and rapid stroke of policy might put an end to the struggle which for so many years had depressed and agitated Makkah.

## LESSON 109(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES

Critical thinkers of Quranic studies have clear thoughts about the Quranic signs. They perceive the concepts and recognize what kind of evidence is needed to analyze the meaning of Quranic words. They know that just giving a definition is not sufficient. They must also be able to give examples of the Quranic concept. On the other hand, uncritical thinkers see words drifting through their minds. They are not able to give examples of the concepts of the words or to critique their use of the concept.

God reveals the truth in the Quran in a variety of ways, some explicit and others by allusion, the latter mainly through the modality of the signs, in order to provoke and engage the human intellect. The signs of God cannot be read just from the face of the signs, but require thinking and reflection. This is indicated in the phrase: *We shall cause them to see Our signs ...* which suggests that the signs may not be instantaneously visible to the naked eye. The whole concept of the signs seeks to forge a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We have sent forth to you ... so that you may meditate on its signs, and those imbued with intuition may recollect.* (38 29) A sign is also a portent and allusion to something other than itself and should not therefore be seen as the final message and purpose of the revelation containing it.

When giving examples and discussing them, you should begin with the clearest and most obvious cases and their opposite. Once your class has discussed them at length can more controversial or difficult concepts be discussed.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 61: THE RANKS (AL-SAFF)

### SIGNS 61:1-61:9

**Madinah:** *Whatever is in the heavens glorified God*
*and whatever is in and on the earth.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (61:1)
*O those who believed!*
*Why say you what you accomplish not?* (61:2)
*It was most troublesome, repugnant to God*
*that you say what you accomplish not.* (61:3)
*Truly, God loves those who fight in His way,*
*ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* (61:4)
*And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk!*
*Why malign me while, surely, you know*
*that I am the Messenger of God to you?*
*So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve.*

*And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (61:5)
*And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob!*
*I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true*
*what was in advance of me in the Torah*
*and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger*
*to approach after me.*
*His name will be Ahmad.*
*But when he brought about the clear portents to them,*
*they said: This is clear sorcery!* (61:6)
*And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie*
*against God while he is being called to submission to God?*
*And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* (61:7)
*They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths*
*but God is One Who Fulfills His light*
*even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* (61:8)
*He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance*
*and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it*
*over all other ways of life*
*even though the ones who are idol worshipper*
*disliked it.* (61:9)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

This Chapter seeks to establish two major themes which permeate its entire text. It also includes a number of secondary references which relate to those major themes.

The first aim of the Chapter is to establish in the conscience of every Muslim the fact that his religion is the final version of the divine system God has laid down for humanity. There were earlier versions, each suited for a particular period of human history. There were also experiences in the lives of earlier messengers and past communities that afforded much to reflect upon. All these have paved the way for this final version of the one divine faith. It incorporates God's final message for humanity, which He has willed to prevail over all other religions.

Therefore, the Chapter mentions Moses' message, making it clear that his people caused him much grief and deviated from his message. They had gone astray and were no longer to be trustees of the divine faith: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(61:5)**

The Chapter then mentions Jesus' message to establish that Jesus

was sent to carry on Moses' earlier message, confirming what was revealed before him of the Torah. He was also given the task of paving the way for the final message, giving news of the Messenger who was to carry it, and serving as a link between the first and the last divine religions. *And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* (61:6) Therefore, his task was to carry the trust of the divine faith after Moses and then to give it to the Messenger whose coming he announced.

It was always confirmed, according to God's knowledge and by His will, that these steps would eventually lead to a final and permanent version to establish God's faith in human life, and this by the final Messenger: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (61:9)

This first clear purpose of the Chapter gives rise to its second purpose. When a Muslim is fully aware of this fact, knows the history of the divine faith and is aware of his share of it, he realizes the duties that this trust involves. Therefore, he has a clear and sincere motive for striving to ensure that this faith prevails over all other religions, just as God wants it to do. There is no longer any vacillation in practically carrying out what one verbally has proposed to do. It is inappropriate for a believer to declare his intention to strive for God's cause but then to refrain from doing so. According to some reports, it appears that there were some cases of this sort. Therefore, the Chapter starts with a proclamation that the entire universe and all that is in it unceasingly glorify God. *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:2-61:4)**

In the middle of the Chapter, the believers are called upon to take part in the most profitable transaction that they could have in this life and in the life to come: *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment? You believe in God and His Messenger and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you if you had been knowing. He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph.*

*And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* **(61:10-61:13)**

The Chapter ends with an appeal to the believers to be the helpers in furthering God's cause, just like Jesus' disciples who supported him when the Children of Jacob continued to deny his message and were hostile towards him: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.* **(61:14)**

These two purposes are very clear throughout the Chapter, taking up nearly all of its text. There only remains a denunciation of those who reject the final message, which is clearly linked to the two main themes. We see this clearly stated after Jesus gave the news of the impending appearance of the final Messenger, the Prophet Muhammad: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery! And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie against God while he is being called to submission to God? And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:6-61:8)**

Thus, every Muslim is clear in his mind that his faith is the final version of the religion God wants to be established on earth. He realizes that the trust of this divine faith is given to him, and he knows that he is required to strive for God's cause as God wants. His line is clear, leaving no room for ambiguity, hesitation or faltering. The goal is well defined and the way to achieve it is made clear.

With this goal-defining directive we also have clear pointers to the nature of the moral code a Muslim must follow. A Muslim must demonstrate consistency between his conscience and his action. He cannot say one thing and then do another. His appearance must not fundamentally differ from what he conceals within himself. He must be consistent in all situations, dedicated in his service to God's cause, clear in both his intention and action, moving with steady steps, collaborating with his brothers so that the Muslim community is seen to be solid and firm like a building with strong foundations.

### WORDS AND ACTIONS

*Whatever is in the heavens glorified God and whatever is in and on the earth. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* **(61:1)** The whole

universe participates in this glorification of God Almighty whose might is combined with His infinite wisdom. This glorification begins this Chapter which declares to Muslims that their religion is the last and final version of the divine faith. They are placed in a position of trustees of this faith based on God's Oneness, denouncing all deviation perpetrated by the ungrateful and idolaters. Muslims are also called upon to strive in support of this faith, which God has willed to prevail over all other religions, hateful as this may be to the ungrateful. This opening, thus, implies that the trust given to Muslims belongs to the entire universe; the faith they strive for is the faith of all creatures in the heavens and the earth. Therefore, this religions prevalence is a universal phenomenon, one that is in line with the whole universe as it turns to God Almighty.

A group of believers are strongly reproached for something they did that was particularly hateful to God. This was inappropriate behavior for believers: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not. Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:2-61:4)**

God instructed His Messenger to say that what God loves most is a belief in Him that allows no room for doubt, and striving against deviant people who reject the faith. However, when jihad was made obligatory, a number of believers found it difficult, and they disliked it distasteful. Therefore, the revelation of the verse saying: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not? It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not.* **(61:2-61:3)**

The Chapter starts then with a reproach for behavior in one or more actual events: *O those who believed! Why say you what you accomplish not?* **(61:2)** It then denounces this action and its lack of morality in a doubly powerful way: *It was most troublesome, repugnant to God that you say what you accomplish not.* **(61:3)** What is viewed by God as most loathsome must certainly be very hateful and repugnant. This statement is sufficient then to make believers view this in the vilest of terms, particularly as they are addressed by God as people who have accepted His religion and who believe in Him.

The next sign refers to that particular matter when they did something different to what they used to profess, namely Jihad. It defines what God likes in this question and what earns His pleasure: *Truly, God loves those who fight in His way, ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.* **(61:4)** This is not mere fighting, but fighting for God's cause, in collaboration with the Muslim com-

munity, within its ranks, and with resolve and steadfastness, so that believers remain: *ranged in rows as if they were a well-compacted structure.*

## MORAL VALUES IN PRACTICE

We have said on several occasions that as it was being revealed, the Quran was carrying on with a process of nation building. Its aim was to build a community that carried the trust of the divine message, implemented its approach and established its system in human life. It was necessary for this purpose that the Quran should undertake the reform of its individuals, establish its bonds as a community, and build it as a living nation in practice. All of this was to be accomplished at the same time. A Muslim is not a Muslim unless he functions within a community. It is inconceivable for the Quranic message to be put into practice unless it functions in a community with well-defined bonds, a system and goal. Its ultimate goal applies to the community as a whole, but it also applies at the same time to each individual. This goal consists of establishing the divine system in people's consciences and practices on earth. To achieve the latter, the Quranic message must live in an actual community that implements it fully.

The Quranic message places much emphasis on the individual's conscience and responsibility, but it is certainly not a religion of individuals who dedicate themselves to worship in their respective little corners. This does not establish the Quranic message within the individuals own conscience, let alone in his whole life. The Quran was not revealed in such isolation. Rather, it was revealed to establish its criteria and standards in human life. It aims to put its mark on every individual and collective activity in every direction. Humanity does not live as individuals, but as groups, communities and nations. And the Quran wants to provide people with its controls as they conduct their lives. Therefore, it is so structured as to cater for people as they live. Its morality, manners, rules and systems are all formulated on this basis. When the Quran directs its attention to the conscience of the individual, it moulds this conscience on the basis that the individual lives in a community. Both the individual and the community turn to God and seek His pleasure. Therefore, a Muslim works within his community to fulfil the religious trust on earth and to establish the Quranic message in life.

Right from the very first day of the Quranic message, a Muslim community was established under the leadership of the Messenger. Its individuals had their commitments towards their community, which also had its special entity distinguishing it from all other com-

munities. It had its values that related to the human conscience but which looked at the same time to the life and welfare of the community. All this took place before the state was established in Madinah. Indeed, the formation of this community was the means by which the state was later established.

When we look at these three signs we find that the morality of the individual is intertwined with the needs of the community, under the authority of religious faith. By its very nature, this faith can function fully in human life only in the form of a system that is properly served and protected.

The first two of the three signs under discussion refer to God's punishment and a strong censure if believers say something that is belied by their deeds. Thus, these two verses delineate the hugely important qualities of truthfulness and consistency in a Muslims personality. A Muslim must reflect the same image in his inner self and in his appearance. His actions must be consistent with his words. This applies in all situations and goes far beyond the call to jihad to which the third verse refers.

A Muslims conscience is reared to such a fine moral standard so as to build the character that can be entrusted with the establishment of the divine system in human life. This is what we see in this Chapter, which provides an important aspect of education for the Muslim community and its preparation to shoulder its great trust.

### DENOUNCED ATTITUDE

The Chapter moves on to speak about the history of this divine system and the stages it went through with the messages revealed before the revelation: Now when Moses spoke to his people, he said: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey. And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* **(61:5-61:6)**

Moses was the one who saved the Children of Jacob from Pharaoh and his tyranny. He was God's Messenger to them, their leader and teacher. Yet the grief that they caused him was of the extended type, taking many colors and forms. His struggle to put them on the right course was hard, tiring and trying. In the accounts the Quran gives of Moses and his people we read about the different aspects of the grief they caused him and how hard he had to struggle

to reform their belief system. *And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(61:5)** Thus their trusteeship of the divine faith was over. They were no longer fit to carry God's message after they had gone so far astray.

Then Jesus came, saying: *O Children of Jacob! I am the Messenger of God to you.* **(61:6)** He did not say to them that he was God or the son of God or a manifestation of God. He was simply a Messenger sent *one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad.* **(61:6)** Thus we see how the divine faith moved from one stage to the next, with all the stages interrelated, moving in the same direction, stretching from heaven to the earth: a long chain moving from link to link. This is the proper image, one worthy of God's design and constitution. It is basically the same approach, taking slightly different forms, according to what suits the needs, experience, knowledge and potential of humanity at each particular stage, until it reaches full maturity. Only then does the last stage arrive and the final form of divine faith be given: perfect, complete, addressing a mature mind that has benefited from all past experience. It opens the way so that the human mind works to its full potential within the method set for man and his abilities.

### TRYING TO EXTINGUISH GOD'S LIGHT

It seems that the signs that follow are mostly concerned with the way the Jews and the Christians received the Prophet mentioned in their scriptures. They are denounced for the reception they gave Muhammad and for their designs to undermine the new and final message God willed to prevail over all other religions:

But when he came to them with all evidence of the truth, they said: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery! And who does greater wrong than he who devised the lie against God while he is being called to submission to God? And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust. They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:6-61:8)**

The idol worshippers' attitude to this new faith was a combination of hostility, evil scheming and misrepresentation. They waged a determined fight against the Quranic message, using all means and resources, and this has continued to the present day. They leveled charges against it: *But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* **(61:6)** This echoes the allegations of idolaters who had no scriptures and had no advance news of

the new faith.

They aim to extinguish God's light with their mouths: *They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths but God is One Who Fulfills His light even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:8)** This sign expresses a fact and paints a pathetic image of those enemies of the Quranic message. It is true that they used to say about the Messenger and his message: *This is plain sorcery.* It is also true that they continued to scheme against the message, trying to undermine it. It is a pathetic picture we see of them as they try to extinguish God's light with a blow from their mouths. How naive and weak they are!

But God will spread His light in all its fullness: *Even though the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(61:8)** There is no doubt that God's promise will always come true. He brought His light to fullness during the lifetime of the Messenger, when the Muslim community came into being as a living and practical representation of the system He had chosen for humanity. It was a well-defined religion with clearly delineated features so that future generations could follow in its footsteps. It was a fact of history, not a theory explained in books. He also brought His light to fullness when he perfected the favor He bestowed on Muslims. Thus, they loved their religion and were keen to fight for its cause. Anyone of them would prefer to b thrown in a fire rather than revert to disbelief. Thus the truth of tl faith lived in peoples' hearts and in their world. This truth continue to spring up time after time, showing that it continues to live in spite of all the sustained aggression, repeated scheming and unabated persecution campaigns waged against the Quranic message and its followers. The fact is that God's light cannot be extinguished by peoples mouths, nor can it be stifled by fire and iron-fisted tactics to which some small people resort.

*He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* **(61:9)**

That God testifies that this Quranic message is: *with guidance and the way of life of The Truth* is the final word. God's will has been fulfilled, and this religion has prevailed over all other religions. It has prevailed by its very nature as a religion. No other religion compares with it in its nature. Pagan and idolatrous religions cannot stand up to it for a moment. Divine religions, on the other hand, find it as their final and complete version. So, in essence, the Quranic message is the perfect and complete version of these faiths, and it will preserve its pure form for the rest of time.

Earlier divine religions were distorted by omissions and addi-

tions. Thus, they became unfit to lead human life in any direction. Even if they had remained free of distortion, they are no more than earlier versions of the divine faith which did not cater for ever-increasing life requirements, because they were intended by God to serve for a limited time only.

This religion will continue to have other roles to fulfil in the life of humanity. It will prevail in fulfilment of God's promise. Human efforts cannot stop God's will, no matter how powerful they may be or how wicked their schemes of misrepresentation are.

These signs served as motivation to the believers to carry the trust for which God has chosen them, after it was abandoned by the Jews and Christians who were not true to it. These signs reassure the believers that they are simply the means of fulfilling God's will. They continue to provide such motivation and reassurance to new believers who are certain that God's promise will always come true. They will give new generations the same motives and reassurance until God's promise comes to be fulfilled in peoples real life once more, God willing.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Quranic Sign 2:260

*When Abraham said? My Lord! Cause me to see how You shall give life to the dead. He said: Shall you (Abraham) not believe? He (Abraham) said: Yea, but so my heart may be at rest. He (God) said: Then take four birds and twist them to yourself. Moreover, lay a part of them on every mountain. Call to them. They will approach you coming eagerly. Know that God is Almighty, Wise.* (2:260)

Questions regarding 2:260:

What did the Quranic text imply by "heart at rest"?

What example does it give?

Is this an example of everyone having to agree?

What is the difference? How could the example be changed to illustrate the term?

You can use a number of techniques to learn to analyze concepts. Instead of just finding a definition of a word, try to paraphrase the word or concept to something that you already understand. You can also add examples from your classmates to the list.

Rewrite passages, making them clear to yourself. For example, a Quranic passage that explains how "heart at rest" means that one is at peace about something.

## LESSON 109(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

> According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.
>
> Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. The Quranic message, in other words, advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....
>
> Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....
>
> Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 61: THE RANKS (AL-SAFF)
## SIGNS 61:10-61:14

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction*
*that will rescue you from a painful punishment?* (61:10)
*You believe in God and His Messenger*
*and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives.*
*That is better for you if you had been knowing.* (61:11)
*He will forgive you your impieties*
*and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden,*
*the winning the sublime triumph.* (61:12)
*And He gives another thing you love,*
*help is from God and victory in the near future,*
*so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* (61:13)
*O those who believed!*
*Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples:*
*Who are my helpers for God?*
*The disciples said: We are the helpers for God.*
*Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob*
*and a section were ungrateful.*

*So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies.*
*And they became ones who are prominent.* (61:14)

## COMMENTARY°

### A MOST PROFITABLE BARGAIN

When the history of faith has thus been outlined and the inevitable triumph the final version of the divine faith has been promised, the Quran addresses the believers—those living at the time and those of later generations—offering them the bargain of their lives. This is a transaction in which the merchandise is faith and the means to achieve it is jihad:

*O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment? You believe in God and His Messenger and struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives. That is better for you if you had been knowing. He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph. And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe* **(61:10-61:13)**

The style employed here uses a variety of forms, such as splitting sentences and reconnecting them, putting forward a question and providing the answer, inversion and transposition all aiming to drive a certain message home. The address starts in the name of faith, *O those who believed! Shall I point you to a transaction that will rescue you from a painful punishment?*

Who would not wish to know what this bargain is and what its terms are! Yet here the sign ends, providing a break between two sentences to add to the expectation. The answer is given when interest in it has been heightened: *You believe in God and His Messenger.* Since they were truly believers in God and His Messenger, they are happy that this part of the answer is already met by them. *And struggle in the way of God with your wealth and your lives.* This is the main theme of the Chapter, and it is given here in this particular fashion to reiterate a message that has already been clarified. God knows that human beings need such repetition and variety of modes and styles in order to rise to the occasion. Realizing this, they will exert their maximum efforts to establish and preserve the divine system.

The Chapter goes further, presenting the bargain in an even more attractive way: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* Knowledge of the truth will encourage the person who knows it to try to obtain this beneficial matter. But the thing that is referred to as being good for us is given in more detail in the next verse. This again heightens the effect even further; providing the details after a general

statement drives the point home and makes it even more desirable. *He will forgive you your impieties and cause you to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, and into good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden, the winning the sublime triumph. And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* This is the most profitable bargain of all, because all that is needed for this deal to be concluded is that a believer should fight for God's cause during his short life on earth. Even if this means him losing his life in this fight, he will be compensated for it with heaven and these goodly mansions where he lives in permanent bliss: *The winning the sublime triumph.*

God's grace is limitless. He knows that human beings always look for something close, in this world, which fits human nature. Therefore, He gives them the happy news of what He has determined of making this religion of the Quranic message prevails in this world, and making its system and code triumph in the life of that same generation: *And He gives another thing you love, help is from God and victory in the near future, so give good tidings to the ones who believe.* **(61:13)**

At this point, the bargain attains the point of supreme returns which only God, whose stores are endless, and whose grace is interminable, can give. What He gives in return, then, are forgiveness, heaven, goodly dwelling and eternal bliss, but in addition to all such profits He gives a soon-to-happen victory. Who would hold back, hesitate when God tells him of this bargain?

With all this temptation and goodly prospects, a thought may well occur to us. A believer who knows the Quranic concept of life and the universe, and appreciates the great horizons this concept opens up before us, and then looks at life without faith, with its narrow concerns and lowly levels, cannot tolerate life without faith even for a moment. He will not hesitate for a second in joining the struggle for Gods cause in order to establish the great concept of faith in real life, so that he may live with the rest of humanity in its superior reality. It may be that he would not need to have any reward other than such a life, because the struggle for Gods cause is, in itself, a reward, giving us contentment and happiness in this life. Moreover, such a believer cannot live in a world devoid of faith, and cannot sit idle, not striving to establish a world governed by faith. Thus, he is strongly motivated to struggle, no matter what happens to him as a result.

### ECHOING JESUS' APPEAL

God, however, knows that people may slacken, and that enthu-

siasm may dampen, efforts may wane and love of safety may lead people to accept the status quo, even though its level is too low. Therefore, the Quran administers this treatment, providing motivation and images to enhance feelings and enthusiasm, making use of every occasion and possible means to appeal to human hearts and souls. It does not rely merely on faith or on one mode of address in the name of this faith. Therefore, the Chapter ends with a new and distinctive address, and one that carries new appeal: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.* **(61:14)**

The disciples were Jesus Christ's pupils. It is said that they were twelve men who were close to him and who dedicated themselves to learning from him. They continued to spread his message and commandments after his term was over. This verse does not give us a detailed story: it simply outlines an attitude. Therefore, we look at it in the context it is given and for the purpose it serves.

*O those who believed! Be helpers of God.* **(61:14)** Place yourselves in this noble position to which He elevates you. Is there a position that is higher and more noble than that of being a supporter of God and His cause? This bargain bestows an honor that is greater than heaven and its happiness: be helpers of God: *as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God.* **(61:14)** They were chosen for this task and earned this honor. Jesus came to give the news of the last Prophet and the last religion. It is only fitting that Muhammad's followers should be chosen for this permanent task, just as Christ's disciples were chosen for it during their period of time. This is clearly apparent in the way the dialogue is presented in this verse.

But what was the result then? *Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful.* **(61:14)** This statement may be interpreted in one of two ways: either the believers in Christ's message are all Christians, whether they remained faithful to its original form or they are those whose faith was subject to distortion. God supported them over the Jews who did not believe in Him at all, as known from history. Or the believers were only those who continued to believe in God's Oneness in defiance of those who gave Jesus divine status, those who believed in the Trinity, or those who deviated in some other way. The believers prevailed in argument, giving irrefutable evidence. Alternatively, we may understand the sign as meaning that those who continued to believe in God's

Oneness were supported by the last religion that endorsed their beliefs. God has made the final victory assured to this religion, as happened in history. This last sense is perhaps the most probable.

The aim of this last address is to strengthen the resolve of the believers in the last religion, the heirs of the divine message. They are the ones charged with a great task, namely the implementation of God's system on earth. They are encouraged to come forward to support God's cause: *O those who believed! Be helpers of God as Jesus son of Mary said to the disciples: Who are my helpers for God? The disciples said: We are the helpers for God. Then, a section believed of the Children of Jacob and a section were ungrateful. So We confirmed those who believed against their enemies. And they became ones who are prominent.*

Thus, the Chapter concludes with a sign that fits the general context and drift of the Chapter, yet has a special color and effect. It enriches an already rich variety of colors and effects.

## Student Assignment

### Example of How Critical Thinking Works

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning.

## Lesson 110(1). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Listening Critically: The Art of Silent Dialogue

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether you are listening to the Quran in a language you understand or listening to your teacher's lesson. You know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into your own. When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar. Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, we have to take the words we are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. We have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. You have to be attentive to what the other person is saying. All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions.

## Quranic Chapter 62: The Congregation (al-Jumu'ah)
## Signs 62:1-62:8

**Madinah:** *Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God*
*and whatever is in and on the earth,*
*The King, The Holy, The Almighty, The Wise.* (62:1)
*He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger*
*from among them who recounts His signs to them*
*and makes them pure and teaches them the Book*
*and wisdom even though they had been before*
*certainly, clearly going astray* (62:2)
*and to others among them who join them not.*
*And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* (62:3)
*That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills.*
*And God is Possessor of the Sublime Grace.* (62:4)
*The parable of those who were entrusted with the Torah,*
*and, again, carries it not is as the parable of a donkey*
*who carries writings.*
*Miserable was the parable of a folk who denied the signs of God!*
*And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* (62:5)
*Say: O those who became Jews!*
*If you claimed that you are the protectors of God*
*to the exclusion of humanity,*
*then, covet death if you had been ones who are sincere.* (62:6)
*But they will not covet it ever*
*because of what their hands put forward.*

*And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* (62:7)
*Say: Truly, the death that you run away from,*
*then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter.*
*Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows*
*of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you*
*what you had been doing.* (62:8)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

This Chapter aims to drive home to the Muslim community in Madinah that it has been chosen to undertake responsibility for the divine faith. It wants the Muslim community to understand that to be in such a position of trust is a great favor God has bestowed on it. It also wants them to understand that by God choosing His last Messenger from among the Arabs is yet another great favor, one that merits a proper expression of gratitude to God. In this context, the Chapter provides certain duties that must be fulfilled by the people who responded to God's Messenger and who accepted the trust. Both the community and the trust are to continue across generations, without fail, because God has determined that the seed planted by the Prophet will continue to grow. The Muslim community has taken over the trust abandoned and neglected by the Children of Jacob. They severed their relation with heaven so as to carry the Torah in the same way as an ass would carry books.

The Chapter drives this fundamental truth home to Muslims in general, starting in particular with the first Muslim community in Madinah, which was responsible for implementing a practical model of the Quranic system. It also applies to all future Muslim generations, as the Chapter clearly indicates.

At the same time, the Chapter addresses certain situations relevant to that first Muslim community, during its long and elaborate transformation process in accordance with Quranic requirements. This process involved the elimination of a host of hindrances, such as a keenness to make quick material gains and other temptations relating to money. These were to be replaced by proper awareness of the great trust assigned to the Muslim community. The Chapter also refers to a particular incident when the Messenger was once delivering his Friday sermon. A trade caravan had arrived at the same time, and the moment people learned of this, they left the mosque to take part in the music and entertainment that traditionally accompanied a caravan's arrival. According to some reports, only twelve of the Prophets Companions remained listening to his sermon. While these reports may not be very accurate as regards the numbers they men-

tion, nonetheless the departure of some people from the mosque was certain. Therefore, it merited this mention in the Quran.

This incident demonstrates the great effort exerted in the cultivation of that first Muslim community's fine manners and behavior, this until it achieved a lofty standard, making it a unique example in the history of the Quranic message and humanity generally. In this way, the Chapter teaches us to always remain patient when we try to build the Quranic character in any community.

The Chapter also includes an invitation to the Jews to a mutual prayer wishing death for those who advocate falsehood. This comes in reply to their claims that they were God's only friends and His chosen people and that God's Messenger must be one of them. The Chapter confirms their unwillingness to accept such an invitation because they felt that the Muslims' claims were unfounded. The Chapter comments that death, from which such people try to escape, will inevitably catch up with them. They will be returned to God who knows all, and He will tell them the truth of their doings. This statement does not, however, only apply to the Jews. Rather, the Chapter facilitates its appreciation by believers as well. They too must realize this fact in order to be able to discharge the duties assigned to them as advocates of Gods message.

### A UNIVERSAL GLORIFICATION

*Whatever is in the heavens glorifies God and whatever is in and on the earth, The King, The Holy, The Almighty, The Wise.* **(62:1)** The Chapter begins with a statement confirming the fact that everything in the heavens and earth extols God's glory, adding a number of His attributes that have a subtle bearing on the theme of the Chapter. The Chapter is given the name *al-Jumuah*, meaning Friday, and it gives instructions about the special congregational prayer on that day, identifying that its time should be dedicated to remembrance of God. All distractions and business should be abandoned in pursuit of what is with God, which is better than everything else. Therefore, the Chapter mentions God's attribute, the Sovereign, who owns everything. This is relevant to business, since all trade normally seeks profit. The Chapter also states that God is Holy; He who is revered and glorified by all creatures in the universe. This attribute of God's contrasts with the entertainment mortals seek, distracting them from His remembrance. This opening sign also mentions that God is Almighty, which is relevant to the invitation made to the Jews for mutual prayer, and also to the death that is bound to happen to all. The last of God;s attributes mentioned in this opening is His wisdom. Such divine wisdom determined the choice of the unlettered people

from among whom God's last Messenger was selected to declare to them God s revelations, purify them and teach them the scriptures and wisdom.

### The Messenger's Terms of Reference

Having started with this sublime glorification of God's limitless glory, the Chapter goes straight to its main theme: *He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray and to others among them who join them not. And He is The Almighty, The Wise.* **(62:2-62:3)**

It is said that the Arabs were called *ummiyyun*, or unlettered, because the great majority of them could neither read nor write. It is reported that the Messenger once defined how many days there are in a month, joining his two hands and pointing with his ten fingers three times, and saying: We are an unlettered community. We neither reckon figures nor write. It is also said that a person who does not write is called *ummi* meaning he is the same as when his mother, or *umm*, gave birth to him. Writing is something that is only learned when a child grows up.

*He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray.* **(62:2)** The favor God has granted to these unlettered people is evident. He chose them to hold the trust embodied in His final message and sent them a Messenger from among themselves to elevate them to a noble position. He took them out of their state of ignorance, highlighted in their being unlettered, giving them instructions in God's book and in wisdom. Thus, their situation changed completely, clearly making them distinguished among all other people on earth.

*And makes them pure.* What the Prophet gave them was far-reaching purification. He purified their feelings and consciences, their actions and behavior, their marital and family lives as also their social lives. Their purification meant that they rose from the depths of idolatrous beliefs to believing in God's Oneness, from erroneous concepts and enigmatic legends to the true and clear faith, from disgraceful immorality to the clean moral values propounded by the Quranic message, from the filthy gains of usury and fraud to clean and legitimate earnings. It was a total purification of the individual and the community, of inner feelings and outward life. Such purification elevates the human being and his concepts, his role and exis-

tence to the high horizon of maintaining his bond with God and with the community on high.

*And teaches them the Book and wisdom* When they are thus instructed, they become the holders of a divine book. They thus learn how to evaluate matters properly. They can also make accurate judgments and define their course in life in the light of such wisdom. *Even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray.* **(62:2)** During their pre-Quranic days, they were certainly in manifest error. Their situation is best described by Jafar ibn Abl Talib when he was questioned about the Quranic message by Negus, the King of Abyssinia. A number of Muslims had migrated there when the Prophet wanted to establish a new base for it. The ungrateful, in turn, had also sent a delegation lo request their extradition. Amr tried to paint a distorted picture of the Muslim immigrants to the king, but the Negus wanted to listen to their version. In this context, Jafar said to him: In our recent past we were ignorant people: we worshipped idols, ate carrion, committed all sorts of sins, attached little value to maintaining good relations with our kinsfolk and behaved badly to our neighbors. Our overruling maxim was that might was right. This continued to be our situation until God sent us, from among ourselves, a Messenger whose good name, honesty, sincerity and integrity were well known to us. He called on us to believe in God, th one and only God, and to stop worshipping all idols which we an our forefathers used to worship alongside Him. He commanded us always to speak the truth and be honest, to be good to our relatives and neighbors, to preserve life and shed no blood, to refrain from sin, perjury, robbing the property of orphans entrusted to our care, and making false accusations against honorable women. He also commanded us to devote our worship to God alone, ascribing to Him no partners of any sort. He further commanded us to pray regularly, to give away certain purifying alms and to fast.

### WORTHY OF TRUST

Despite all their negative qualities during their pre-Quranic days, God knew that the Arabs were the ones to be entrusted with the new faith and that they would be true to their trust. He was also aware of their great potential once they were put on the right way. They could use all this potential for their new faith, whereas the Children of Jacob no longer had it. The latter had endured humiliation for a long time in Egypt under Pharaonic rule. As a result they portrayed many aspects of deviation and ill feeling. Indeed, they were unable to rid themselves of these negative effects, whether during Moses' lifetime, or later.

In His perfect and absolute knowledge, God knew that the Arabian Peninsula was the best cradle for His new faith. This was a faith that aimed to liberate the whole world from the erroneous ways of ignorance and rid it of the decadence that had eaten deep into the great civilizations, leaving them hollow.

*To others among them who join them not.* **(62:3)** God's choice of a community or an individual to be responsible for the great truth, to receive the light that emanates from Him, to be the link between the earth and heaven, is a favor of unparalleled proportions. It exceeds by far any sacrifices such an individual or community may give, in wealth, effort and life. It outweighs all the trouble they may undertake, the opposition they have to encounter and the hard struggle they have to endure. God thus reminds the Muslim community in Madinah, as well as those who will come after it, of the great favor He has granted them when He chose them for this task, sending them a Messenger to purify them and instruct them in the divine book and in wisdom. God's Messenger also left a great wealth of wisdom for future generations, whereby they learn from the practical example of that first Muslim community.

### ONE ROLE ENDED

The Chapter then adds a statement that implies that any previous trustees of God's message has ended. Their hearts are no longer alert, dedicated and active enough to enable them to live up to the trust they were once given: *The parable of those who were entrusted with the Torah, and, again, carries it not is as the parable of a donkey who carries writings.* **(62:5)**

They had been entrusted with the Torah, and charged with being true to the faith and the divine law, but they failed to do so. The initial duty of this trust is to formulate a thorough and correct understanding of the divine message, and then to implement it both within one's own life and in human life at large.

*Miserable was the parable of a folk who denied the signs of God! And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(62:5)** Likewise are all those who were given the trust of divine faith but who failed to live up to it. Muslims across many generations, as well as those living today, who have Muslim names but who fail to live up to what the Quranic message requires, and particularly those who read the Quran but fall short of what is required of them, are indeed like the ass carrying a load of heavy books. Unfortunately, these are numerous. The question is not that of books being carried: it is a question of understanding the books and putting into practice the teachings they impart.

*Say: O those who became Jews! If you claimed that you are the protectors of God to the exclusion of humanity, then, covet death if you had been ones who are sincere. But they will not covet it ever because of what their hands put forward. And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust. Say: Truly, the death that you run away from, then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter. Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(62:6-63:8)**

What this invitation entails is that the two groups stand together face to face and they all pray to God to inflict punishment on the group upholding falsehood. All groups the Messenger invited to such mutual prayer feared to do so; essentially, they refused to take up the challenge. This indicates that deep inside they realized that what the Messenger said was the truth and that his faith was true.

These signs may only represent a challenge to them, rather than an invitation to mutual prayer. Since they alleged that they were God's only friends among all humanity, why would they fear death, and reveal themselves to be so cowardly? If their claims were true, they would be in a position of favor with God after they die. So why does the prospect of death fill them with fear? This challenge is followed by a statement making it clear that their claims were untrue. They were aware that they had not done enough good deeds to ensure a good position with God or to hope for His reward. A person who has not prepared for his journey will always be in fear of what may happen along the road: *But they will not covet it ever because of what their hands put forward. And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* **(62:7)**

A statement follows that establishes the nature of death and what comes after it. It shows them that their attempts to escape from death are of little use. It will inevitably overtake them. After death, all will return to God where they will have their deeds reckoned and where they will face the consequences of the same: *Say: Truly, the death that you run away from, then, it will be, truly, that which you encounter. Again, you will be returned to the One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible and He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(62:8)**

This Quranic statement makes clear to the addressees and to everyone else the truth that people often overlook and prefer not to think about, despite facing it all the time: namely, this life is bound to end. To stay away from God during one's lifetime will not avert a person from returning to Him, for there is no refuge from God except by returning to Him. The reckoning of everyone's deeds will inevitably follow this return. There is simply no escape.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

*And drive not away those who call to their Lord in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance* ... (6:52) the Quranic message tells us. Who is one who drives them away? Those who drive them away are the unjust. It is unjust to drive away anyone who calls on his or her Lord in the morning or evening wanting His Countenance, His Presence. This behavior is the sign of a believer no matter what his social status may be. Their reckoning is not on us and our reckoning is not on them. Therefore, a believer knows the answer to the Quranic question: *Is not God greater in knowledge of the ones who are thankful?* (6:53)

### PRACTICE QUESTIONS FOR LISTENING CRITICALLY ARE:

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is ....
Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying. Listening critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of, understanding the elements of thought in, and evaluating, the reasoning of an oral communication. Reading critically means constructing an accurate interpretation of the sacred text, understanding the elements of thought in it, and evaluating, the reasoning of it.

## LESSON 110(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES

Critical thinkers constantly ask themselves questions. Take the example of al-Ghazzali who writes in *Deliverance from Error:*

> So I began by saying to myself: What I seek is knowledge of the true meaning of things. Of necessity, therefore, I must inquire into just what the true meaning of knowledge is.
>
> Then it became clear to me that sure and certain knowledge is that in which the thing known is made so manifest that no doubt clings to it, nor is it accompanied by the possibility of error and deception, nor can the mind even suppose such a possibility. Furthermore, safety from error must accompany the certainty to such a degree that, if someone proposed to show it to be false—for example, a man who would turn a stone into gold and a stick into a snake — his feat would not induce any doubt or denial. For if I know that ten is more than three, and then someone were to say: No, on the contrary, three is more than ten, as is proved by my turning this stick into a snake—and if he were to do just that and I were to see him do it, I would not doubt my knowledge because of his fear. The only effect it would have on me would be to make me wonder how he could do such a thing. But there would be no doubt at all about what I knew!
>
> I realized, then, that whatever I did not know in this way and was not certain of with this kind of certainty was unreliable and unsure knowledge, and that every knowledge unaccompanied by safety from error is not sure and certain knowledge.
>
> I then scrutinized all my cognitions and found myself devoid of any knowledge answering the previous description except in the case of sense-data and the self- evident truths. So I said: Now that despair has befallen me, the only hope I have of acquiring an insight into obscure matters is to start from things that are perfectly clear, namely sense-data and the self-evident truths. Therefore, I must first study these thoroughly in order to reach a sure answer to these questions: Is my reliance on sense-data and my safety from error in the case of self-evident truths of the same kind as that which I formerly had regarding the dicta of authority, and of the same kind as that which most men have regarding speculative matters? Or is it a verifiable safety containing no deception or danger?
>
> With great earnestness, therefore, I began to reflect on my sense-data to see if I could make myself doubt them. This protracted effort to induce doubt finally brought me to the point where my soul would not allow me to admit safety from error even in the case of my sense-

data. Rather it began to be open to doubt about them and to say: Whence comes your reliance on sense-data? The strongest of the senses is the sense of sight. Now this looks at a shadow and sees it standing still and motionless and judges that motion must be denied. Then, due to experience and observation, an hour later it knows that the shadow is moving, and that it did not move in a sudden spurt, but so gradually and imperceptibly that it was never completely at rest. Sight also looks at a star and sees it as something small, the size of a dinar: then geometrical proofs demonstrate that it surpasses the earth in size. In the case of this and of similar instances of sense-data the sense-judge makes its judgments, but the reason-judge refutes it and repeatedly gives it the lie in an incontrovertible fashion.[2]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 62: THE CONGREGATION (AL-JUMU'AH) SIGNS 62:9-62:11

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*When the formal prayer was proclaimed*
*on the day of congregation,*
*then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God*
*and forsake trading.*
*That is better for you if you had been knowing.* (62:9)
*Then, when the formal prayer had ended,*
*disperse through the earth looking for the grace of God.*
*And remember God frequently*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.* (62:10)
*And when they considered a transaction or a diversion,*
*they broke away toward it,*
*and left you as one who is standing up.*
*Say: What is with God is better than any diversion*
*or than any transaction.*
*And God is Best of the ones who provide.* (62:11)

### COMMENTARY°

#### THE CONGREGATION ON FRIDAY

The last section of the Chapter provides certain teachings concerning Friday and its congregational prayer. It refers to an event that might have been repeated; given the way it is described suggests such repetition: *O those who believed! When the formal prayer was proclaimed on the day of congregation, then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God and forsake trading. That is better for you if you had been knowing. Then, when the formal prayer had ended, disperse*

*through the earth looking for the grace of God. And remember God frequently so that perhaps you will prosper. And when they considered a transaction or a diversion, they broke away toward it, and left you as one who is standing up. Say: What is with God is better than any diversion or than any transaction. And God is Best of the ones who provide.*( **62:9-62:11)**

Friday Prayer is a weekly prayer that must be offered in congregation. It cannot be offered by anyone on his own. Muslims meet in Friday Prayer and listen to a sermon that reminds them of their duties towards God. We can say that it is an organizational prayer, following the Quranic method of preparing for this life and the life to come together by the same measures and the same acts of worship.

Friday Prayer gives a clear and specific impression of the nature of the Quranic Message and the Muslim community. The first sign in this section orders Muslims to leave off all business once they hear the call to prayer: *O those who believed! When the formal prayer was proclaimed on the day of congregation, then, hasten about to the Remembrance of God and forsake trading.* **(62:9)** It provides encouragement for so abandoning anything related to the life of this world and its concerns: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* **(62:9)** This suggests that leaving off trade and business was not easy; it required such encouragement. Moreover, it provides goo and repeated education. Every now and then, people need a perio of time when they free themselves from their preoccupation with earning a living and the attractions of worldly life. They need such periods when they can be in close contact with their Lord, glorifying Him and experiencing the happiness resulting from dedication to His service. They need to fill their hearts and lungs with the pure, clean and refreshing air that comes with such dedication.

When they have done so, they can then return to their business, continuing to remember God: *Then, when the formal prayer had ended, disperse through the earth looking for the grace of God.* **(62:10)** The Quranic system provides a perfect balance between the needs of life on earth, with all that it requires of work and effort, and the need to be away from all this for a short while to attend to worship. Time spent away from the preoccupations of this life is necessary to keep the heart alive. Without it, it cannot live up to the great trust God has given us and nor can it fulfil its duties. It is important to remember God while we are busy earning our living, for such remembrance transforms our work activities into acts of worship. Nevertheless, we need such short periods of complete dedication to worship, as clearly implied in the last two signs.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

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5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message here contains three "say" verses, messages the Prophet is specifically told to relate regarding faith. What are the three? To worship other than God is to go astray; to follow the desires of another is to go astray; God has sent the Prophet with a clear sign by which He distinguishes truth from falsehood that the ungrateful deny. If the command that the ungrateful wish to hasten to come were to arrive, the command of God would already have been decided. "Say" verses are an important concept in the Quran as a means of Quranic commands—imperatives—to be followed. Knowing the Quran as the first source for information about the Prophet is essential. This will give us a "new view" into his life.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I loved learning how to ask questions.
I was able to ask questions in class.
I incorporated questions into my papers.
I realized that 1/6th of the Quran are questions.
I hope to study them and learn more about them over time.

# APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
63 = 43
64 = 44
65 = 45
66 = 46
67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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Laleh Bakhtiar

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 21

## of the Revel

(8 AH/629-6

Library of Islam

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 21*

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 21 of the Revelation (8 AH/629-630 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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# Year 21 of the Revelation: Madinah
## Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 8 AH
## ca. May 1, 629 CE-April 19, 630 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 21*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 8 AH/ca. May 1, 629 CE-April 19, 630 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

## THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?
2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?
3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.
4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?
5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?
6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

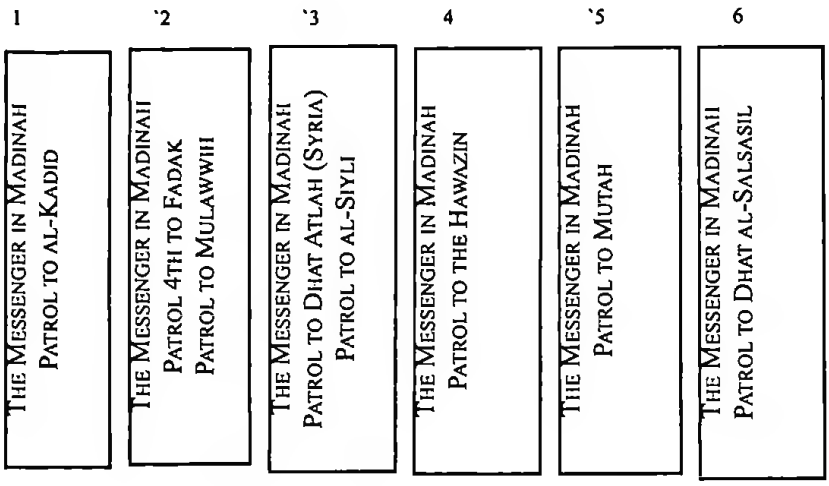
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 21*

## TIMELINE

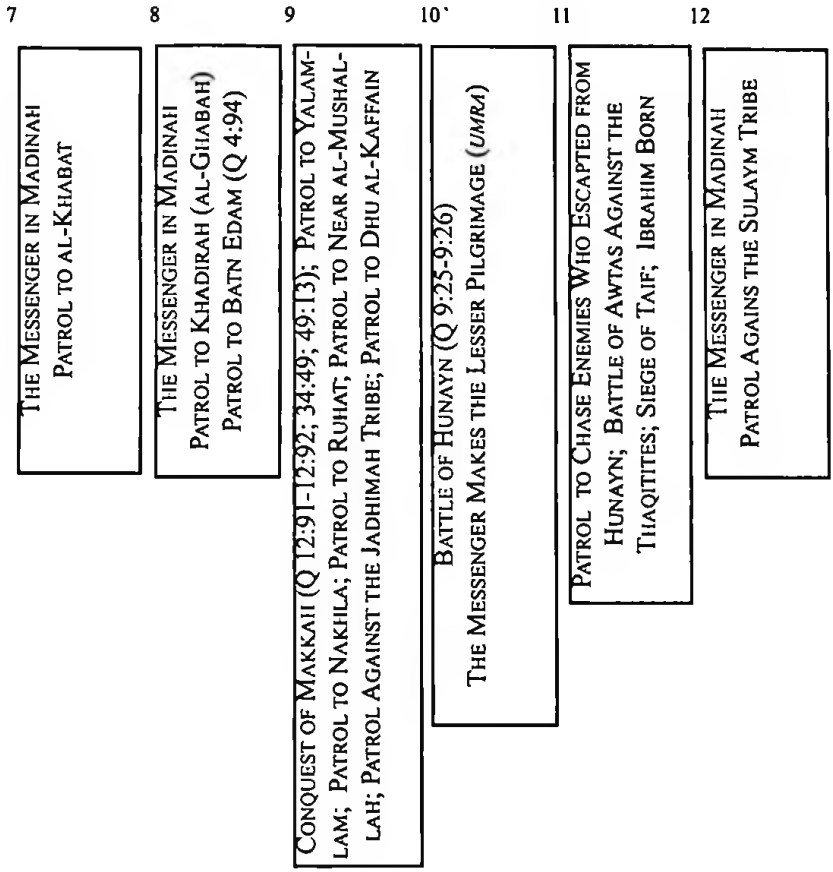



**Key**
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE, CONQUEST = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 21*

## TIMELINE




**Key**

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE, CONQUEST = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 21* presented here begins with Lesson 111 and Quranic Chapter 48, the 111th chapter revealed.

## LESSON 111(1) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT

Critical thinkers read with a healthy skepticism. But they do not doubt or deny until they understand. They clarify before they judge. They expect intelligibility from what they read. Critical readers ask themselves questions as they read, wonder about the implications of, reasons for, examples of, and meaning of the sacred text. They do not approach written material as a collection of sentences, but as a whole, trying out various interpretations until one fits all of the sign or signs, rather than ignoring or distorting statements that don't fit their interpretation.

According to al-Ghazzali, our beliefs arise from our intellect (*aql*). According to traditional sources, thought is the power of the mind (heart) that facilitates knowledge. Based on this definition, thinking: is the movement of that power that is driven by the intellect. It can only occur when an initial image of the subject is attainable in the mind of the thinker.

Further, the Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the sacred text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge espoused with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression understands the religion, signifying a rational and inquisitive approach to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message. In other words, it advises analytical knowledge and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely dogmatic approach. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions faith based on detailed analysis as opposed to undigested and un-comprehended faith. The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought....

Thus, if there are hadith reports, or any factual reports for that matter, which do not stand to reason and understanding, they would be most likely discounted and abandoned, with the exception only of devotional matters (*ibadat*) which are based on faith and submission more than on rational analysis....

Another feature of the Quranic vision of thinking is indicated in its emphasis on wisdom and good judgment (*hikmah*) which signifies the quality of thinking, its regard for values, and its outcome. Wisdom and good judgment can easily be said to be more important than technical know-how and expertise, as it can guide expert knowledge

as to its proper application and the attainment of excellence.

The Quran mentions *hikmah* twenty times, and in about ten of these it is immediately preceded by the word *kitab*, which is a reference to divine scripture—primarily the Quran, but also other divinely revealed scriptures. The text thus says with reference to Jesus that God Most High will teach him the Scripture and wisdom (*hikmah*), the Torah and the Gospel....

The juxtaposition of book and wisdom is often contextualized by a reference to the sending of prophets who teach the people and guide them with scripture and wisdom as it is said of the Prophet Muhammad (as well as) ... the descendants of Prophet Abraham.

The holistic, superior, and indivisible value of hikmah in the Quran is underscored in one of its verses to the effect that when God bestows wisdom on someone that person is indeed granted an immense source of goodness.... To mention wisdom together with the Book evidently means that the Quran should be read with wisdom and divorcing the one from the other by taking a totally dogmatic approach to the Quran goes against the divine purpose and intention of its revelation. To read the Quran in the light of wisdom thus means a comprehensive reading that reaches beyond the obvious meaning of its words to encapsulate the goal and purpose of its message and then also reflection on the ways and means of how its benefits can be realized for the individual and society.[1]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY (AL-FATH)
## SIGNS 48:1-48:10

**Madinah:** *Truly, We gave victory to **you**, a clear victory,* (48:1)
*that God forgive **you** what was former of **your** impiety*
*and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing*
*on **you** and guide **you** on a straight path* (48:2)
*and that God help **you** with a mighty help.* (48:3)
*He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend*
*into the hearts of the ones who believe*
*that they add belief to their belief.*
*And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth.*
*And God had been Knowing, Wise* (48:4)
*that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe*
*and the females, ones who believe*
*Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in them forever,*
*and that He absolve them of their evil deeds.*
*And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* (48:5)

*And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites*
*and the females, ones who are hypocrites*
*and the males, ones who are idol worshippers*
*and the females, ones who are idol worshippers,*
*the ones who think an evil thought about God,*
*a reprehensible thought, for them is*
*the reprehensible turn of fortune.*
*And God was angry with them.*
*And He cursed them and prepared hell for them.*
*And how evil a Homecoming!* (48:6)
*And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth.*
*And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (48:7)
*Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness*
*and one who gives good tidings*
*and as a warner,* (48:8)
*so that you believe in God and His Messenger*
*and that you support him and revere Him*
*and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide.* (48:9)
*Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**,*
*take the pledge of alliance only to God.*
*The hand of God is over their hands.*
*Then, whoever broke his oath,*
*breaks his oath only to the harm of himself.*
*And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God,*
*He will give him a sublime compensation.* (48:10)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE GENERAL ATMOSPHERE

Such was the atmosphere in the Muslim community prior to the revelation of Chapter 48. The Messenger was certain of what God had inspired him. Therefore, he allowed himself no say in the drift of events other than what such divine inspiration pointed to. He referred to this inspiration at every point and before taking any step. Neither the ungrateful nor pressure by his Companions, who were infuriated by the hostility of the ungrateful, would make him change his course. Eventually, God put tranquillity in the Muslims' hearts and they were reassured, accepting without hesitation what the Messenger told them, just like their brethren who never entertained any doubt in the first place.

Therefore,the opening of this Chapter gives the Messenger happy news that greatly delights his heart: *Truly, We gave victory to **you**, a clear victory, that God forgive **you** what was former of **your** impiety and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing*

*on **you** and guide **you** on a straight path and that God help **you** with a mighty help.* **(48:1-48:3)** The opening also refers to the tranquillity granted to the believers, acknowledging that they were true believers and promising them forgiveness of sins, reward and support from on high: *And God had been Knowing, Wise that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* **(48:4-48:5)** By contrast, their enemies, hypocrites and idolaters alike, incur God's displeasure and suffering in the life to come: *And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the males, ones who are polytheists and the females, ones who are polytheists, the ones who think an evil **thought** about God, a reprehensible **thought**, for them is the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God was angry with them. And He cursed them and prepared hell for them. And how evil a Homecoming!* **(48:6)**

The Chapter also notes the pledge the believers gave to the Messenger, considering it a pledge to God. Thus, it establishes a direct relation between the believers and their Lord, the Eternal: *Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner, so that you believe in God and His Messenger and that you support him and revere Him and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:8-48:10)**

Before completing the discussion of the attitude of the believers at al-Hudaybiyah, the Chapter refers, within the context of unkept pledges, to the desert Arabs who stayed behind and did not join the Messenger on this expedition. It shows their excuses to be unfounded and exposes their ill thoughts about God and their expectation that the Messenger and his Companions would encounter disaster. It directs the Messenger as to the attitude he should adopt towards them in future. The style here emphasizes the strength of the believers and the weakness of those who stayed behind. It makes it clear that the Muslims would soon be able to make rich war gains, all of which would be coveted by those who were too slow to join the Messenger on this expedition: *The ones who are left behind will say to **you** among the nomads: Our property and our people occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their*

*hearts. Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do. Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts. But you thought a reprehensible thought, and you had been a lost folk. And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little. Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.* **(48:11-48:16)**

Within the same context, the Chapter tells us about those who have genuine excuses, justifying their staying behind. These are they who have some disability or illness that prevents their participation in war: *There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame, nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. And whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.* **(48:17)**

The Chapter turns again to the believers, their thoughts and attitudes. It refers to them in a way that is full of honor and acceptance, delighting them with good news of what was soon to happen, praising their firm belief and readiness to sacrifice themselves for God's cause. We see here that God puts this select group of people under His direct care, bestowing on them His goodly acceptance and strengthening them in their noble attitude. He tells them in person that He in His glory was a witness with them as they offered their pledges at a particular spot, under the tree. He was certainly aware of their inner thoughts and feelings, was pleased with them and ensured that they would soon achieve victory that would yield great gains, relating this to God's law that operates throughout the universe. This is indeed a great and remarkable event witnessed by the whole universe: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for*

*He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* 48:18 And they will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise. God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful. And if those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before. You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:18-48:23)**

The Chapter reminds the believers of God's grace as He stopped their enemies who were intent upon fighting them, denouncing those same enemies who prevented their entry into the Sacred Mosque, and refusing to allow their sacrificial animals to reach their place of slaughter. It reveals to them God's wisdom as He stopped conflict that year, and His grace in making what happened acceptable to them, bestowing tranquillity on them. All this was for a purpose unknown to them but known to God. It was the much better and greater prospect of bringing Makkah into the Quranic fold and making the Quranic message prevail over all religions. All this was according to God's design and by His will: *And He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. And God had been Seeing of what you do. They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing. Certainly, God was sincere to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth: You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed, as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads or as ones whose hair is cut short. You will fear not. He knew what you*

*know not and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand. He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life. And God sufficed as a witness.* **(48:24-48:28)**

The Chapter concludes with an outline highlighting the special characteristics of this select group of humanity, the Messenger's Companions. It refers to their description in the Torah and the Gospel and emphasizes God's promise to them of forgiveness of their sins and granting them rich reward: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves. You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves. They are looking for grace from God and contentment. Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration. This is their parable in the Torah. And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized. It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk impressing the ones who sow so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful, God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* **(48:29)**

Thus the Chapter gives a full image of the situation that led to its revelation. It does not relate the events in their chronological order, but highlights the lessons that must be learnt, linking individual events to their permanent rules, and special attitudes to the overall universal system. As always in the Quran, it is hearts and minds that are addressed in a highly inspiring way.

### A COMMUNITY ATTAINS MATURITY

Looking at the Chapter as a whole and comparing it to the one that precedes it in the Quranic order reveals the profound change in the general attitude of the Muslim community over the three years we believe to have separated the revelation of these two Chapters. We realize the effects the Quran had on that community and how it benefited by the careful education the Messenger imparted to it, enabling it to assume its unique position and play its unparalleled role in human history.

It is clear from the general ambience of this Chapter and the feelings it generates that the Muslim community had attained maturity, achieved a coherently high standard of faith, become reassured about its duties and no longer needed strong incentives in order to discharge such duties that required sacrificing life and property. It now needed a restraining influence so that it could look at things calmly and accept the decision of the Highest Leadership of the Quranic message

to observe a temporary truce in its confrontation with the enemy.

No longer does the Muslim community need a directive of the type: *So be not faint and call for peace while you have the upper hand. God is with you and He will never cheat you out of your actions.* **(47:35)** or an admonition like: *Lo and behold! These are being called to spend in the way of God, yet among you are some who are misers. And whoever is miser, then, he is a miser only to himself. God is Sufficient and you are poor. And if you turn away, He will have a folk other than you in exchange. Again, they will not be the like of you.* **(47:38)** Nor was there any more need to provide incentives to fight for God's cause by speaking about the nobility of martyrdom and the great honor God grants to martyrs. We do not have here any exposition of the purpose of putting the Muslim community to the test by imposing a duty to fight for God's cause, as we have in the Chapter Muhammad: *But if God willed, He Himself would have, certainly, avenged you. But it is to try some of you with some others. As for those who were slain in the way of God, He will never cause their actions to go astray. He will guide them and He will make right their state of mind. And He will cause them to enter the Garden with which He acquainted them.* **(47:4-47:6)**

By contrast, the discourse in the present Chapter highlights the tranquillity God placed in the believers' hearts, or bestowed on them, to restrain them from being over zealous. It also reassures them that what took place was by God's command, referring to the Messenger's wisdom as he opted for a lenient and conciliatory approach. It speaks of God's pleasure with those who offered their pledges to the Messenger under the tree, and paints at the end a bright picture of the Muslim community under the Messenger's leadership.

The Chapter certainly speaks of the need to fulfil the pledges given to the Messenger and threatens those who go back on their pledges: *Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to you, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:10)** Clearly the reference here is one of honor to those giving their pledges to the Messenger, emphasizing the seriousness of the pledge. Reference to breaking such pledges occurs in respect of the desert Arabs who stayed behind. The same consideration applies to the hypocrites, men and women. This reference in the Chapter is made in passing, indicating the weakness of this group as compared with the entire Muslim community which had purged its ranks and attained maturity. This reference is very quick, unlike what we have in the preceding

Chapter, Muhammad, where the discussion of the hypocrites and their Jewish allies occupies a large part of it. This is yet another development in the external attitude of the Muslim community, one that is in harmony with the developments taking place within it.

There is also in the Chapter clear evidence of the strength of the Muslim community in relation to the strength of the ungrateful. This is evident in the Chapter as a whole and in specific verses. Other verses point out that further victories were to be achieved, making those who stayed behind eager to join the Muslims in order to share the promised war gains. The reference to the fact that the Quranic message would prevail over all other religions is also indicative of the increasing strength of the Muslim community in the period separating the revelation of these two Chapters that occur consecutively in the Quranic order.

There was, then, a clear change in people s hearts, the overall condition of the Muslim community and the situation it was facing. This change can easily be recognized when we follow the events during the Messenger's lifetime as discussed in the Quran. The change reflects the effects of the Quranic approach to the type of education the Muslim community should undergo and the method the Messenger followed in effecting that education. That happy community of the Messenger's Companions was unique in history. However, the change has a telling lesson for those who are in the position of leadership of human communities. They must never become fed up with human weakness, or with what may linger on of past habits, influences of social environment, worldly desire and lack of motivation. All these may have strong effects at first, but persistence, patience and a wise approach ensure steady progress. Moreover, tests and experience are bound to produce their effects when they are utilized to reinforce educational efforts. Gradually, weaknesses dwindle and disappear and believers begin to aspire to higher horizons. They are able to see the superb light emanating from on High. In God's Messenger we have a great shining example to follow. In the Quran we have guidance about the right path to take.

### A DIFFERENT CONCEPT OF VICTORY

*Truly, We gave victory to you, a clear victory, that God forgive you what was former of your impiety and what remained behind that He fulfill His divine blessing on you and guide you on a straight path and that God help you with a mighty help.* **(48:1-48:3)**

The Chapter opens with a statement about the great favors bestowed by God on His Messenger, comprising glorious victory, complete forgiveness, perfect blessing and assured guidance. Together,

these favors are granted as a reward for complete, unshakeable trust in God's inspiration and directive, as well as a willing submission to His guidance. The Messenger demonstrated absolute trust, leaving no room whatsoever for his own judgment. He had a dream and proceeded to take action on its basis. His she-camel refused to move and people cried out that she had refused to go forward. He told them that such a refusal was not in her nature.

Subsequent events confirmed the wisdom of the Messenger's action, which was endorsed by the Quran. These events highlighted the great material, moral, political, military and religious benefits that accrued to the Muslim community as a result of this peace agreement. They were now looked upon as the most important power in Arabia; the desert Arabs who stayed away from the Quranic message came forward apologizing for their earlier stance, while the hypocrites could hardly raise a voice. Arab delegations came to Madinah from distant parts pledging loyalty to the Messenger. Subsequently too, the Messenger was able to smash the strength of the Jews in Khaybar and their other villages on the road to Syria. He was able to send delegations to distant parts, such as Najd, Yemen and al-Balqa. Only two years later, he was able to conquer Makkah peacefully, putting an end to the long drawn out conflict with the ungrateful. It was then that the Quranic message achieved its final victory in Arabia, and people flocked to the Quranic message in large numbers.

Furthermore, the signing of the peace treaty at al-Hudaybiyah was a great victory in a different sense: it was a conquest of hearts and minds, epitomized by the pledge given by the Messenger's Companions that earned them God's pleasure as specifically mentioned in the Chapter. It is this conquest that made them worthy of the image drawn of them in the last verse of the Chapter. In the history of the divine message, this was a great victory that must be given its true value as we look at how it influenced the turn of events in subsequent years.

The Messenger was delighted with the revelation of this Chapter. He was overjoyed with the great favors God bestowed on him and his Companions: the victory, complete forgiveness, perfect blessings, guidance on a straight way and God's acceptance of the believers and His beautiful description of them in the Chapter. He said: A Chapter has been revealed to me tonight, and it is much dearer to me than all that the sun overlooks put together.

### A MEDLEY OF EMOTIONS

The first three signs of the Chapter were specifically addressed to the Messenger. The Chapter goes on to describe the great favors

God bestowed on the Muslim community as He gave them such a victory, adding tranquillity to their hearts, and promising further favors in the life to come:

*He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief. And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* **(48:4-48:5)**

Tranquillity, or *sakinah* in Arabic, is a word with pleasant connotations. When a heart is blessed with it, it generates reassurance, trust, comfort, dignity and a ready acceptance of God's will.

The believers experienced conflicting emotions during this encounter. They were looking forward to the fulfilment of the Messenger's dream of entering the Sacred Mosque in Makkah, realizing that a messenger's dream always came true. They had then to endure a stand-off with the ungrateful, followed by the Messenger's acceptance to return without visiting the Sacred Mosque that year, even though they had entered into the state of consecration required for that Mosques entry and had marked their animals for sacrifice following the completion of their worship at the Sacred Mosque.

The believers found other conditions imposed by the ungrateful to be totally unfair. Specifically, they found unacceptable the condition that the Messenger should return to the ungrateful anyone from among them who came to him, declaring himself a Muslim, without being given the prior permission of his father or guardian. They were also totally displeased when the ungrateful delegation objected to the mention of God's name, *al-Rahman*, and with their objection to the Messenger's position as God's Messenger being included in the document.

It is reported that Ali, who was writing the document, refused to erase this reference, as requested by the ungrateful representative, Suhayl ibn Amr. In fact, the Messenger himself rubbed it out, saying: My Lord! You know that I am **Your** Messenger.

The Muslims'dedication and enthusiasm to fight the ungrateful were total, as evidenced by the fact that they all pledged themselves to it. Yet the confrontation ended peacefully, requiring them to turn back and go home. Understandably, this was not easy for them to accept. We sense this in their reluctance to slaughter their sacrifices and shave their heads, indicating the end of their rituals. Indeed, the Messenger had to issue his command to them three times, and this

to those who were always quick to put his every order into effect. Furthermore, Urwah, the fourth emissary of the ungrateful, reported on this to the ungrateful when he returned to give them his advice.

As we have noted already, so great was the feeling among the Muslims that they did not slaughter their sacrifices, nor shave their heads until they saw the Messenger doing so himself. Only his action spurred them to follow suit; such was the state of their bewilderment. The Muslims had travelled from Madinah intending to perform *umra*. The thought of fighting was not in their minds. Neither mentally nor practically were they prepared for war. They were surprised to see the ungrateful taking such an adamant stance against them, and they were greatly upset when they heard the news that Uthman had been killed. To the Muslims, it was totally unexpected for the ungrateful to send some of its men to aim arrows and stone missiles at their camp.

Therefore, when the Messenger, upon hearing of Uthman's assassination, decided to fight the ungrateful and asked his Companions to give him their pledges in support, every single one of them did so. This did not, however, diminish their surprise to find themselves in a situation totally different from what they hoped to do. Such feelings were only a part of what they experienced. Moreover, they were heavily outnumbered, amounting to 1,400 pilgrims, while the ungrateful were in their own city, supported by desert Arabs and other idolaters.

When we consider all these aspects, we better understand the meaning and the effect of the Quranic statement: *He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** We can imagine the situation as though we are present there, and feel the comfort of this tranquillity and the peace it generated in the believers' hearts. God was fully aware that the feelings they experienced were motivated by faith. They were keen to defend their faith and fight for it. They did not look for any personal glory. Therefore, He bestowed His blessings on them, giving them such tranquillity, *that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** Reassurance is of a higher rank than passion and enthusiasm. It carries with it a combination of trust, conviction and absence of worry.

The Chapter also indicates that military victory was in no way difficult. On the contrary, it was easy, had God, in His infinite wisdom, decided to gratify the believers' wishes. At His command there are countless forces that cannot be overcome. They would have ensured victory for the Muslims at His bidding, whenever He wished: *And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And*

*God had been Knowing, Wise* **(48:4)** Indeed everything moves as determined by God in His wisdom. It was through His knowledge and wisdom that: *He it is Who caused the tranquility to descend into the hearts of the ones who believe that they add belief to their belief.* **(48:4)** He will thus bring about what He has decided to give them: victory and blessings: *that He causes to enter the males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, and that He absolve them of their evil deeds. And that had been with God a winning a sublime triumph.* **(48:5)**

If in God's sight this is a great triumph, then it is indeed a great one. It was so for those who achieved it, giving it its right measure. The believers were delighted with what God granted them. Having listened to the opening of the Chapter, learning about the favors God bestowed on His Messenger, they were looking forward to their own share, asking about it. When they were told of it, they were delighted and reassured.

The Chapter then tells them of another aspect of God s wisdom in letting events develop in the way they did; namely, requiting the ungrateful and the hypocrites for their actions: *And that He punish the males, ones who are hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the males, ones who are polytheists and the females, ones who are polytheists, the ones who think an evil thought about God, a reprehensible thought, for them is the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God was angry with them. And He cursed them and prepared hell for them. And how evil a Homecoming! And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Almighty, Wise. Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner,***(48:6-48:7)**

These signs group together the hypocrites and the idolaters, men and women, highlighting their common characteristic of harboring evil thoughts about God, having no trust in His forthcoming help to the believers. The Chapter makes clear that they are all encompassed by evil and cannot depart from its circle. They incur God's anger and, therefore, they are expelled from His mercy. Evil will be their end. In fact, hypocrisy is in no way less than idolatry; indeed it is more contemptible. The harm the hypocrites do to the Muslim community is no less than what the idolaters do, although the two types are different in nature and physical aspects.

The Chapter makes harboring evil thoughts about God the distinctive feature of the hypocrites and the ungrateful. A believer always thinks well of God, expecting what is good in all situations, good and bad. He believes that God will bring him good in both con-

ditions. The fact is that a believer s heart always looks up to God, whose grace and favors never cease. When we establish the bond of faith with God, we realize this fact and appreciate it. The hypocrites and the ungrateful, by contrast, have no bond with God. They have no feeling of this concept, which, in turn, leads them to entertain evil thoughts about Him, casting only a superficial look at things and judging situations by appearances. Thus, they expect only evil to befall them and to befall the believers whenever appearances so suggest. They have no idea of God's power, control of things and events, or His subtle and elaborate planning.

The sign groups together all types of enemies of the Quranic message, describing their position with God and what He has prepared for them, adding a comment pointing to God's power and wisdom: *And to God belongs the armies of the heavens and the earth. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:7)** Nothing of their situation escapes God, and nothing is too hard for Him.

### THE PROMISE AND THE REWARD

Again the Chapter addresses the Messenger, pointing out his role and its objective. It tells the believers about their duty towards God after having received His message. It makes clear to them that the pledges they gave to the Messenger were indeed pledges given to God. Solemn indeed is a pledge made to God. Furthermore, this imparts to the pledge given to the Messenger even greater honor: *Truly, We sent you as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner, so that you believe in God and His Messenger and that you support him and revere Him and glorify Him at early morning dawn and eventide. Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to you, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands. Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself. And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:8-48:10)**

God's Messenger is a witness who will testify that he has delivered the message entrusted to him to humanity, and he will speak of the reception people gave him. He will state that some people believed and accepted the faith while others rejected it denying its truth, and others still were hypocrites. Some did well and others did badly. He will give his testimony just as he delivered his message. He bears the good news of forgiveness and acceptance by God, as well as a good reward from Him to the believers. He also warns against the ill fate that awaits the ungrateful, hypocrites and evildoers, as they all incur God's anger.

Such is the Messenger's role. Addressing the believers, the Chapter makes clear to them the purpose of God's message. It is to believe in God and His Messenger, and to fulfil the tasks and duties of faith. Thus, they support God by implementing His law, and they honor Him in their hearts as they feel His majesty. They also extol His glory and praise Him at both ends of the day, which means in effect the whole day. What is meant here is that in their hearts and minds they feel their bond with God at all times. This is the result of faith which the believers will receive because God sent His Messenger and assigned to him his role outlined in the sign: *Truly, We sent **you** as one who bears witness and one who gives good tidings and as a warner.* **(48:8)**

The Messenger came to them to establish their bond with God, and to solemnize a pledge they give to Him that continues even though the Messenger is no longer with them. When he stretches his hand out to accept their pledges, he is doing so on God's behalf: *Truly, those who take the pledge of allegiance to **you**, take the pledge of alliance only to God. The hand of God is over their hands.* **(48:10)** This is an awesome description. When any of them put his hand in the Messenger's to give his pledge, he realized that God was there present, accepting the pledge, and that His hand also embraced their hands. How awesome and majestic.

This image puts an end to any thought anyone might have had about retracting their pledge. Should the Messenger disappear in person, God Himself will never disappear. It is He who accepts this pledge, watches its fulfilment and gives its reward.*Then, whoever broke his oath, breaks his oath only to the harm of himself.* **(48:10)** Whatever pledge is made between God and any of His servants is richly profitable to God's servant. It is he who will profit by God's favors, while God is in no need of anyone. Therefore, when anyone breaks his pledge with God, he is the loser. Furthermore, he exposes himself to Gods anger and punishment, because God loves those who are true to their promises and dislikes those who deliberately break them. *And whoever lived up to what he made as a contract with God, He will give him a sublime compensation.* **(48:10)** No details are given here of the reward; it is merely described as rich, or great, as is the literal meaning of the Arabic adjective 'azim used here. This reward is rich by God's measure and value which we who dwell in this limited space of the earth can never imagine.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message asks: *Will you, then, not reflect?* (6:50) The message is to learn to reflect. The Prophet does not have the treasures of God with him nor does he know the unseen nor does he say that he is an angel. This indicates that he is a human being who only follows what is revealed to him. The unseeing and the seeing: they are not on the same level. Those who reflect on its message are among "the seeing."

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Quranic critical thinkers clarify before they judge.

Quranic critical thinkers expect understanding from what they read.

Quranic critical thinkers check and double-check their understanding.

Quranic critical thinkers ask themselves questions.

Quranic critical thinkers wonder about the implications of or reasons for meaning and truth in what they learn.

Quranic critical thinkers learn so that they can ignore whatever does not fit their own personal interpretation or what of their own interpretation will distort what they are learning

## LESSON 111(2) CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 48: THE VICTORY (AL-FATH)
## SIGNS 48:11-48:17

**Madinah:** *The ones who are left behind*
*will say to you among the nomads:*
*Our property and our people occupied us,*
*so ask forgiveness for us.*
*They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.*
*Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all*
*if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit?*
*Nay! God had been aware of what you do.* (48:11)
*Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about*
*and the ones who believe to their people ever,*
*and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts.*
*But you thought a reprehensible thought,*
*and you had been a lost folk.* (48:12)
*And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger,*
*truly, We made ready a blaze*
*for the ones who are ungrateful.* (48:13)
*And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.*
*He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (48:14)
*The ones who are left behind will say*
*when you set out to take the gains:*
*Let us follow you.*
*They want to substitute for the assertion of God.*

*Say: You will not follow us.*
*Thus, God said before; then, they will say:*
*Nay! You are jealous of us.*
*Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little.* (48:15)
*Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads:*
*You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might.*
*You will fight them or they will submit to God.*
*Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation.*
*But if you turn away as you turned away before,*
*He will punish you with a painful punishment.* (48:16)
*There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame,*
*nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger,*
*He will cause him to enter Gardens*
*beneath which rivers run.*
*And whoever turns away,*
*He will punish him with a painful punishment.* (48:17)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE ONES LEFT BEHIND

Having established the true nature of the pledge and referred to thoughts of breaking or honoring it, the Chapter now speaks of the desert Arabs who were left behind. They refused to accompany the Messenger on this expedition, entertaining no good thoughts about God, expecting defeat for the believers who were going to the ungrateful's own land, when it was the ungrateful that had attacked Madinah twice over a short period of time. The fact is that the first, the Battle of Uhud, took place in Shawwal, the 10th month of 3 AH, while the second, the Battle of the Trench, occurred towards the end of 5 AH, which means that two full years separated them.

The Chapter tells the Messenger of what excuses the desert Arabs would employ when they see him returning safely together with his Companions. They would realize that the treaty he had concluded with the ungrateful signified that the latter had climbed down. No matter how harsh its conditions may appear, the ungrateful now treated Muhammad and his followers as its equal, with whom it sought peace rather than confrontation. The Chapter also details the true reasons why these desert Arabs stayed behind, exposing their reality to the Messenger and the believers. It tells the Messenger of the rich war gains the Muslims would shortly achieve, and that these same Arabs would try to accompany them on their next encounter in order to receive a share of those. The Chapter tells the Messenger what he should say to them when this takes place. He must not allow them to be part of that expedition, which was certain to end in his

favor. Only those present at al-Hudaybiyah would be permitted to accompany him. He was also to tell those Arabs left behind that they would be called upon to join the Muslims when they needed to fight other people known for their great war prowess. If they truly wanted to join the Muslim camp, they should join the Muslim army on that day, whatever outcome God may give them. If they obeyed, they would receive rich reward. If they turned away, as they did once before, they would be made to endure a painful suffering:

The desert Arabs who stayed behind will say to **you**: *The ones who are left behind will say to you among the nomads: Our property and our people occupied us, so ask forgiveness for us. They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts. Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do. Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts. But you thought a reprehensible thought, and you had been a lost folk. And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate. The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little. Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.* **(48:11-48:16)**

The Quran does not merely reply to the excuses of those who stayed behind; it uses the occasion to treat minds and souls, identifying the points of weakness and deviation in order to treat them effectively. It then states those values that are true and permanent, as well as the proper basis on which to base attitudes and behavior.

Those Arabs who stayed behind belonged to the tribes of Ghifar, Muzaynah, Ashja, Aslam and others who lived in the area close to Madinah. They tried to excuse themselves, saying: *Our property and our people occupied us.* **(48:11)** This is no excuse. People will always have families and property. If having these is a good excuse to exempt anyone from their duties towards their faith, no one would ever fulfil such duties. They also asked the Messenger: *So ask forgiveness*

*for us.* **(48:11)** *They say with their tongues what is not in their hearts.* **(48:11)** The reply given them stresses the truth of God's will that cannot be stopped or prevented by bravery in war or its avoidance. They are all subject to God's power, and He is fully aware of all things. His will controls everything as He determines: *Say: Who, then, has sway over you against God at all if He wanted to harm you or wanted to bring you profit? Nay! God had been aware of what you do.* **(48:11)**

The question implies the instruction to submit to God's will and to obey His orders without hesitation. No hesitation will ever prevent harm or delay benefit. Excuses are no use, because nothing escapes God's knowledge and nothing affects the requital He decides on the basis of His perfect knowledge. This is a fitting directive, using the appropriate moment in order to heighten its effect.

*Nay! You thought that the Messenger would never turn about and the ones who believe to their people ever, and that was made to appear pleasing in your hearts.* **(48:12)** Thus they are shown the truth of their attitude. Their true thoughts and intentions, which they thought were concealed, are placed before their very eyes. They thought that the Messenger and his Companions were going to their death, and that they would never return to their families in Madinah. They said of the Messenger: Is he going to fight those who attacked him in his home city and killed his Companions? They allowed no room for the care God takes of those of His servants who are dedicated to His cause. Moreover, since they lacked motivation based on faith, they could not feel the importance of duty and that a duty must be fulfilled, regardless of the cost. Nor did they realize that obedience to the Messenger must not be based on any thought of gain or loss. It must be fulfilled as a duty, regardless of the outcome.

The thoughts they had seemed pleasing to their hearts. They could not see any other possibility. Their ill thoughts about God derived from the fact that their hearts had always been devoid of goodness. The Chapter uses a single Arabic word for the phrase devoid of goodness. This word is normally used to describe a dead land where no plant can grow. The same applies to these Arab's hearts, as also to them generally. Their hearts are lifeless, yield nothing good. How else would a human heart be when it harbors no good thought of God, having severed its bond with Him? It must be lifeless, heading for nothing good.

### THE TRUE BALANCE

Such do people think of the Muslim community. However, it is only people like those desert Arabs who have severed their bond with

God, their hearts devoid of goodness, who view the Muslim community as being on the verge of eradication, heavily outnumbered by the forces of evil and deviation. They look at the limited numbers of the advocates of the Quranic message, or their poor artillery, or their low position in society and conclude that they will inevitably be defeated. Like the desert Arabs of old, such people avoid every association with the believers, looking only for their own safety. God, however, will ensure that such ill thoughts inevitably end in failure, and will change positions as only He knows how, to set the true balance. It is He who holds this balance in His mighty hand, lowering some people and raising others above them. The hypocrites who harbour evil thoughts about God, throughout all places and generations, can never understand how this is done.

The true balance is that of faith. Therefore, those Arabs are referred to it. The Chapter outlines the general rule of rewarding people in accordance with this balance, highlighting the possibility of receiving God's grace. They are thus encouraged to take the opportunity available to them now in order to benefit by God's forgiveness and to enjoy His grace: *And whoever believes not in God and His Messenger, truly, We made ready a blaze for the ones who are ungrateful. And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills. And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(48:13-48:14)**

They used to cite their families and property as the reasons why they stayed behind. Of what benefit will their families and property be to them when they are thrown in the blazing fire, which has been prepared for them if they continue to deny God and His Messenger? These signs show such people the two options available to them and they are invited to choose one. Then it is God who issues the promise and the warning to them. To Him belongs the heavens and the earth and all in between them. It is He who can extend forgiveness and inflict punishment, as He chooses.

God rewards people according to their deeds, but His will is free, unrestricted by anything. This truth is established here so that it is accepted by all. There is no conflict between it and the fact that peoples reward is based on their actions, because this is the basis that God has willed to choose. Nevertheless, God's forgiveness and mercy is close at hand. Let anyone who so wishes benefit by it, before the suffering befalls those who refuse to believe in God and His Messenger in accordance with His will.

### FINE PROSPECTS

The Chapter then shows a glimpse of the prospects God has in

store for the believers, contrary to all the thoughts of the ungrateful. This is done in such a way that suggests that it is all going to happen soon: *The ones who are left behind will say when you set out to take the gains: Let us follow you. They want to substitute for the assertion of God. Say: You will not follow us. Thus, God said before; then, they will say: Nay! You are jealous of us. Nay! They had not been understanding, but a little.* **(48:15)**

Most commentators on the Quran take this sign to refer to the conquest of Khaybar. This may be so, but the statement also gives clear impressions that do not necessarily relate to Khaybar. It suggests that the Muslims would soon achieve an easy victory. Those who previously stayed behind would realize that it would be so and therefore they ask to join the Muslims. Perhaps what makes Quranic commentators specify Khaybar is that this occurred soon after al-Hudaybiyah. Indeed, it took place in the first month of 7 AH, less than two months after the signing of the treaty, and it brought the Muslims rich war gains. Khaybar was the last Jewish stronghold in the Arabian Peninsula. It was here that some of the Jews of al-Nadir and Qurayzah had sought refuge after they were ordered out of Madinah.

Commentators are almost unanimous that God promised those who give the Messenger their pledges at al-Hudaybiyah would have the war gains achieved at Khaybar, all for themselves, with no share for anyone else. When the Messenger marched on Khaybar, he did not allow anyone to join him other than those who had taken part at al-Hudaybiyah.

God instructed the Messenger to refuse permission to those who had previously stayed behind, assuming that they even offered to join the Muslim army. Specifically, he was to say that their participation would be contrary to God's orders. He also told the Messenger that when they were refused such permission, they would say: You begrudge us and want to deprive us of our legitimate share of any war gains. What they say thus betrays their lack of understanding of God's purpose. It is fitting that those who are eager to share in the booty be deprived of it, while those who are dedicated to God's cause, obeying His orders, should enjoy His grace and be the ones to enjoy the war gains He grants the Muslim community. They were the ones who had obeyed when they expected nothing other than a hard fight.

God further instructed the Messenger to tell them that they would be called upon to fight against people known for their war prowess, and that the fight would continue until this enemy had been subdued. Should those who formerly stayed behind pass this test,

they will still receive their reward, but if they continue to disobey they will have failed what is their final test: *Say to the ones who are left behind among the nomads: You will be called against a folk imbued with severe might. You will fight them or they will submit to God. Then, if you obey, God will give you a fairer compensation. But if you turn away as you turned away before, He will punish you with a painful punishment.* **(48:16)**

Reports differ as to the identity of this military might, and to whether this would occur during the Messenger's lifetime or after he passed away. It is most likely, however that it happened during his lifetime so as to further test the Arabs in the surrounding areas of Madinah. What is important here is to note the Quranic method of education, and how hearts and souls are treated by Quranic directives and practical tests. We see this clearly in the way the inner thoughts of those who stayed behind were exposed before their very own eyes to the believers. We also see it in the way true values and the principles of proper behavior are pointed out to them.

Since the test makes it a duty binding on everyone to join the Muslim army, God identifies those with real excuses who are exempt from so joining, without their being subject to any punishment: *There is neither a fault on the blind, nor a fault on the lame, nor a fault on the sick, and whoever obeys God and His Messenger, He will cause him to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. And whoever turns away, He will punish him with a painful punishment.* **(48:17)** A person who is blind or lame has a permanent disability exempting him from military engagement. A person who is sick has a temporary excuse, one that extends until he has recovered full health.

Ultimately, it is all a question of obedience or disobedience. It is a mental attitude, not a technical situation. Those who obey God and His Messenger will be rewarded by admittance into heaven. Those who turn away will receive painful suffering. Anyone can put the hardship of striving for Gods cause in the balance against the comfort of staying behind and what it entails. He may then make his own choice.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

What are the strengths of the believers' arguments and the weaknesses of the arguments of the ungrateful in these Quranic signs? What information are we given to interpret? Who are the intercessors: What had the ungrateful assumed: What are the consequences of their assumptions?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I looked up each Quranic verse that was an example of dialectical reasoning above and understood:

If you are in doubt, ... then
Do they say ... ? Rather
Bring forward your witnesses
Bring your proof
Have they not considered?
Let the human being consider ...
Clear proof...

## INTERLUDE 1

## THE CONQUEST OF MAKKAH

The ungrateful, idol worshippers are the first to break the peace treaty of Hudaybiah by instigating the Bakr tribe to attack the Kuzaah tribe who had formed an alliance with the Muslims. Twenty-three members of the Kuzaah are killed.

With this act, they change the political situation of peace and calm into one of tension. Members of the Kuzaah tribe go to Madinah. After explaining what had happened, they say: O Messenger of God, the idol worshippers attacked us in the middle of the night while some of us were asleep and others were in the middle of their devotions. They killed some and took others as prisoners and then left the area. They added: We have been massacred because we are Muslims.

When the Messenger hears this, he promises to help them. The elderly head of the tribe, Budil, who lives in Makkah, goes to see the Messenger. He explains what had happened to them and that the idol worshippers had supported the Bakr tribe.

The idol worshippers regret their action because they are well aware of the increasing power of the Quranic message. They also know that there will be some reaction to the agreement they had broken. Abu Sufyan, the leader of the idol-worshippers, leaves Makkah for Madinah to renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. Half way there he meets with the leader of the Khazaah and realizes that he has gone to Madinah and given a report about what had happened to the Messenger.

Upon his arrival in Madinah, Abu Sufyan goes to see the Messenger. He speaks about renewing the Treaty of Hudaybiah, but receives no response. He then joins with the Companions of the Messenger, but they do not accept either. Then he goes to Ali and Fatima's house and asks them to intercede with the Messenger. Ali says: Whenever the Messenger makes a decision, we do not oppose him. Then he turns to the Messenger's daughter and says: Tell your son Hasan to shelter the Makkans and renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. Fatima says: My child is still very young. He is still not old enough to do what you ask.

Abu Sufyan realizes he had no alternative but to go to the mosque. He stands up among the people and asks them to renew the Treaty of Hudaybiah. He then leaves the mosque, gets on his camel and leaves for Makkah. When he arrives there, he is reproached by the idolaters' leaders for being too simple-minded in thinking that he could make amends for the abrogation of the Treaty in this way.

The Messenger realizes that the time is ripe for a move against the idolater's in Makkah. He commands the people to get ready to move. He does not tell them the destination so the idol worshippers will be taken unaware and agree

to surrender. In this way, Makkah will be taken without any bloodshed. But one of the Companions of the Messenger knows of the destination and he sends a secret letter to three men among the leaders of the idol worshippers. There he speaks of the Messenger's plans to conquer Makkah. He gives the letter to a woman named Sarah to deliver and he gives her ten dinars to do so.

Sarah hides Hatab's letter in her braided hair and travels towards Makkah. The angel of revelation tells the Messenger about the treason. The Messenger assigns Ali and Zubayr to go as quickly as possible to Makkah to prevent Sarah from reaching there and delivering the letter to the Makkan leaders.

The Messenger's followers immediately leave for Makkah. Ali catches up with her and says: The Messenger does not lie. You must give back the letter. At Ali's insistence, she takes the letter from her hair and gives it to Ali. He takes it to the Messenger and the spy fails to get word to the idol worshippers.

The Messenger sends people to the tribes in the area to invite them to join with him. He tells them to be ready the first of Ramadan in Madinah. With this mobilization, 10,000 Muslims are prepared to support the Messenger in the conquest of Makkah.

The Messenger leaves Madinah on the 10th of Ramadan, 8 AH. This time he tells the army he is going to Makkah. He asks everyone to not allow this news to reach the idol worshippers. They stop at a point near Makkah without the idol worshipers being aware of their presence.

The army of the Quranic message, after setting up camp, is told to light fires at night in all areas so that the flames can be seen by the people in Makkah and frighten them.

Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib is a resident of Makkah. At the same time as the Messenger is moving towards Makkah, he has decided to leave Makkah for Madinah and join the Muslims. He accidentally meets up with the Messenger at Juhfah, which is half way between Makkah and Madinah. By the Messenger's command, he joins the Muslims moving towards Makkah.

He thinks to himself that if the idol worshippers are informed about the strength of the Muslims, it might be a positive step towards preventing bloodshed. It will be a conquest without opposition. Thus the very night that the flames can be seen all around Makkah, he gets on the white horse of the Messenger to tell the idol worshippers about the danger they face from the Muslims.

That same night several Makkan leaders leave Makkah with Abu Sufyan, the leader of the idolaters and the strongest opponent of the Quranic message. Suddenly Abbas, the Messenger's uncle, hears the voice of Abu Sufyan as he is saying: I have never seen such flames and such an army. Abbas says: I recognized Abu Sufyan's voice. I called to him and he heard me. He asked: Abbas, what is going on. I said the Messenger had come with this army. He asked: What should I do? I said to him: If the Muslims get their hands on you,

they will kill you. It is best if you come with me to the Messenger so that I can protect you. Abu Sufyan goes with Abbas to the Messenger.

When he approaches the Messenger, some of his Companions ask that Abu Sufyan be killed. But Abbas says: I have given him protection. Abbas protects Abu Sufyan through the night and then takes him to the Messenger at daybreak.

The Messenger says to him: Do you still not believe that there is a God other than gods? In response, Abu Sufyan says: May my mother and father be sacrificed for you. How patient and kind you are. If there had been gods other than the One God, they would have helped me.

Then the Messenger says to him: Do you believe in my mission? Abu Sufyan recalls the kindness of the Messenger but refuses to accept his mission. At the insistence of Abbas, however, he recites the *shahadat:* There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God. Then the Messenger's uncle asks that at this sensitive point he be given an advantage. The Messenger grants three advantages to this long time enemy of his: Those people would be spared who first of all, seek refuge in Abu Sufyan's house; second, those who stay in their homes behind closed doors; and third, those who seek refuge in the Masjid al-Haram and who sit down there.

After receiving these concessions from the Messenger Abu Sufyan returns to Makkah to tell the idol worshippers about the kindness and affection of the Messenger, but first the Messenger wants him to see the Muslim army on review. He tells Abbas to find the most suitable place for Abu Sufyan to see the full splendor of the army. This will put fear in his heart so that when he returns to the idolaters, he will be able to convince them that resistance is useless. The Messenger's command is carried out and the army marches in review before Abu Sufyan.

That which frightens Abu Sufyan more than anything else is that each group that passes him shouts out: God is Greater, *Allahu Akbar* in such a way that their voices resound in the valley. Abu Sufyan is in great anticipation to see in which group the Messenger participates. With each unit which passes, Abu Sufyan asks Abbas: Is Muhammad among this unit?

Finally a unit which contains more than 4000 soldiers amongst which are 2000 in chain mail and many flags in the hands of the commanders in regular lines catches the attention of Abu Sufyan and Abbas. Only the eyes of the soldiers can be seen. They ride fast Arab horses and reddish haired camels. The power of this unit so overwhelms Abu Sufyan that he says to Abbas: There is no power which can succeed against them. Abbas! The sultanate of your nephew is great indeed. Abbas corrects him by saying: This is not a sultanate; it is prophethood.

When the Green Army passes in front of Abu Sufyan and its great flag bearer, Saad ibn Abadah, sees Abu Sufyan, he cries out: Today is the day of battle. Today weak powers will be destroyed and useless strength will be elim-

inated. Today the gods of the ungrateful are disgraced. Abu Sufyan's body shakes. When the Messenger faces him, he turns to the Messenger and says: Saad ibn Abadah shouts out that today is the day of battle and that today useless forces will be eliminated and today is the disgrace of the gods of the idolaters. In response, the Messenger says: Today is the day of Mercy. The One God has blessed today. He takes the flag from Saad and gives it to his son, Qays.

After seeing this, Abu Sufyan returns to Makkah. He tells the idolaters about what he had seen. He tells them which three groups are given security. Then he cries out in Makkah: Woe be upon you. Muhammad has come with a great army. You do not have the power to resist. He has come here with an army of 10,000 well-equipped men. Some of the leaders try to instigate the people to resist, but this proves to be of no avail. After twelve or thirteen people die, they all disperse.

After the Messenger enters Makkah, in addition to granting security to the three groups he had mentioned, he gives the flag to Abd Allah Khatham and says anyone who gathers under his flag would be safe.

All of the areas of Makkah, in this way, are taken by the Messenger. After a time of rest, a tent is set up for him at the gates to Makkah, he directs himself to Makkah and the Masjid al-Haram in order to circumambulate the House of God. Wearing his military clothes, he passes through the regular ranks of the Muslims and idol worshippers. He enters the Masjid al-Haram and stands before the Black Stone. The Companions of the Messenger shout out the *takbir*. Then, while he is circumambulating the Kabah, he uses the stick in his hand to knock down the idols. He says: Truth has come and falsehood has vanished. 360 idols are destroyed outside of Makkah including the largest, Hubal, which had been placed on top of the Kabah.

The Messenger finishes his circumambulating and while the people gathered around him, he sits in a corner of the mosque. He sends Bilal to find the Keeper of the Keys of the Kabah to come to open the door to the Kabah. The Keeper of the Keys first refuses but finally hands them over. The door of the Kabah is opened. The Messenger enters the House. As he enters he recites: *And say: The Truth drew near and falsehood vanishes! Truly falsehood has been made to vanish away.* (17:81). Then he cleans the walls of any images. He places his hands on the door frame in such a way that all of the people can see his illuminated form. He turns to them and says: Thanks be to God Who has kept His Promise and aided His servant and defeated His enemies.

Suddenly the Messenger breaks the silence of the people and says: What do you say and what do you think? Everyone responds: We only think about goodness. You have been victorious. When the idol worshippers surround the Messenger and ask for forgiveness, the Messenger recites what Prophet Joseph said to his brothers when they had come to him in Egypt: *No blame on you this day. May God forgive you. And He is One Who is Most Merciful of the ones who are most merciful.* (12:92). Then he says: Go. You are all free.

## Lesson 111(3) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Reasoning Dialectically: Evaluating Interpretations

Dialectical thinking refers to dialogical thinking conducted in order to test the strengths and weaknesses of opposing points of view. Court trials and debates are dialectical in intention. They pit idea against idea, reasoning against counter-reasoning in order to get at the truth of a matter. As soon as we begin to explore ideas, we find that some clash or are inconsistent with others. If we are to integrate our thinking, we need to assess which of the conflicting ideas we will provisionally accept and which we shall provisionally reject, or which parts of the views are strong and which weak, or how the views can be reconciled. You need to develop dialectical reasoning skills, so that your thinking not only moves comfortably between divergent points of view or lines of thought, but also makes some assessments in light of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the evidence or reasoning presented. Therefore, when thinking dialectically, critical thinkers can use critical affective strategies appropriately.

## Quranic Chapter 48: The Victory (al-Fath)
## Signs 48:18-48:26

**Madinah:** *God was well-pleased*
*with the ones who believe*
*when they take the pledge of allegiance*
*to **you** beneath the tree*
*for He knew what was in their hearts*
*and He caused the tranquility to descend on them*
*and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* (48:18)
*And they will take much gain.*
*And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (48:19)
*God promised you much gain*
*that you will take and He quickened this for you.*
*He limited the hands of humanity from you*
*so that perhaps it will be a sign*
*to the ones who believe*
*and that He guide you to a straight path* (48:20)
*and other gains which are not yet within your power.*
*Surely, God enclosed them.*
*And God had been over everything Powerful.* (48:21)
*And if those who were ungrateful fought you,*
*they would have turned their backs.*
*Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper.* (48:22)
*This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before.*
*You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* (48:23)

*And He it is who limited their hands from you*
*and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah*
*after He made you victors over them.*
*And God had been Seeing of what you do.* (48:24)
*They were ungrateful,*
*and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram,*
*and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift*
*from reaching its place of sacrifice.*
*If it had not been for men, ones who believe,*
*and for women, ones who believe,*
*whom you know not that you tread on them*
*and guilt should light on you without your knowledge.*
*This was so that God may cause to enter*
*into His mercy whomever He wills.*
*If they were clearly apart, separated,*
*We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them*
*with a painful punishment.* (48:25)
*Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry*
*in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance.*
*Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger*
*and on the ones who believe*
*and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.*
*They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it.*
*And God had been Knowing.* (48:26)

## COMMENTARY°

### PEOPLE S PLEDGES AND GOD'S PROMISES

This part of the Chapter speaks only about and with the believers, with that unique and happy group of them who gave their pledges and commitments to the Messenger under the tree, in the presence of God, the witness who solemnized that pledge placing His hand over theirs. That elite group heard God's words revealed to His Messenger: *God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)** They also listened to the Messenger as he said to them: You are today the best people on earth.

What we have here is a discourse about this select group as God speaks to His Messenger. We also have God's words to this select group, giving them the happy news of forthcoming war gains and conquests. God also speaks about the care He took of them, protecting them from their enemies, during this trip and what He will do for

them in future, assuring them of victory by means of the laws He has set in operation, which never fail. He strongly condemns the enemies of the Muslim community, explains the wisdom behind choosing peace this time, confirming the truth of the Messenger's dream about visiting the Sacred Mosque. He assures the Muslims that they will enter it in safety, fearing nothing, and that His faith will prevail over all religions on earth.

The Chapter concludes with a sign describing this community of believers, the Messenger's Companions, adding their descriptions to be found in the Torah and the Gospels, as well as His promise of forgiveness of their sins and granting them a great reward.

### A UNIQUE EVENT

*God was well-pleased with the ones who believe when they take the pledge of allegiance to **you** beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand. And they will take much gain. And God had been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:18-48:19)**

Today, fourteen hundred years after the event, I am trying to visualize the great moment when the universe witnessed the divine announcement from on high addressed by God Almighty to His trusted Messenger concerning the Muslim community. I want to see the whole universe at that great moment and its conscience as it responds to this most generous announcement, speaking of a group of people at a particular spot in this universe. I want to feel how those extremely happy people felt when they heard, with their own ears, that God was speaking about them, telling them that He was well pleased with them, defining the place where they were and what they had done in order to earn His pleasure: *When they take the pledge of allegiance to **you** beneath the tree* **(48:18)** They heard it all from the Messenger who never said anything but the truth, delivering it as a special message from God Almighty.

O my God! How did they—those happy people—receive that divine communication at that ecstatic moment? It is a communication that points to every single one of them and says: *For He knew what was in their hearts and He sent forth the tranquility on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)**

When we read or hear God's statement: *God is the Protector of those who have believed* (2:257) or, *God is with the ones who remain steadfast.* (2:153) we may feel happy and reassured, hoping that we may be included among such. Those people, however, heard that God was speaking about them personally and individually, telling each of

them that He was well pleased with them, knowing what was in their hearts. That is great indeed!

*For He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)** He knew that the passion they felt in their hearts was for their faith, not for their ego or for personal glory. He knew that their pledges were sincere, and that they were seriously restraining themselves so that they would stand behind the Messenger in all sincerity, obeying his orders, accepting any adversity with patience. Therefore, "He sent down tranquillity upon them? We almost see this tranquillity being lowered calmly and with dignity, pouring an air of peace and reassurance on those hearts that were full of enthusiasm for direct action.

God also said: *He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* **(48:18)** This peace treaty, coupled with the circumstances leading to it, was indeed a victory, heralding many more. The conquest of Khaybar, which most commentators cite as the one promised here, may indeed have been one of these. *And they will take much gain.* **(48:19)** If the victory meant here is that of Khaybar, then the war gains would be with the victory itself. However, if the victory mentioned refers to the peace treaty itself, then the promised war gains would come later. Indeed, the peace treaty left the Muslims free to achieve victory on several fronts.

*And God had been Almighty, Wise.* **(48:19)** This comment fits well with the preceding verses. God's pleasure, the victory and the promise of war gains are all indicative of God's might, control, elaborate planning and wisdom.

### AS GOD SPEAKS

Now the Chapter addresses the believers themselves, speaking to them of the peace treaty, or victory, to which they resigned themselves: God has promised you [people] many war gains that you shall achieve: *God promised you much gain that you will take and He quickened this for you. He limited the hands of humanity from you so that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe and that He guide you to a straight path and other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:20-48:21)**

This is an announcement of happy things to happen, given by God to the believers who accept it as certain. They realize that God has prepared for them numerous gains and they lived afterwards to see this true promise fulfilled in the best way. God says to them here that He has hastened this one, which may be a reference to al-Hu-

daybiyah to emphasize its being a victory, as indeed it was, or it may be a reference to Khaybar since Khaybar produced the first war gains after al-Hudaybiyah.

God also granted them a favor when He restrained the hands of hostile forces. He indeed held back the hands of the ungrateful, as well as other hostile groups who were waiting for a chance to attack the Muslims. Their opponents outnumbered them by far, but the believers were true to their pledges, fulfilling their duties. Therefore, God rewarded them by restraining and holding back their enemies' hands.

*So that perhaps it will be a sign to the ones who believe.* **(48:20)** This encounter, which they disliked at first, feeling it to be too much of a demand, is described by God as a great sign, which will enable them to see the results of what He has planned for them and how they will be rewarded for obeying the Messenger and submitting to His will. Thus, they will come to realize that it is great, bringing them much benefit, and they will be doubly reassured.

*And that He guide you to a straight path.* **(48:20)** This is again a reward for your obedience and true allegiance. Thus, they will have a combination of war gains and guidance on a straight way, giving them all that is good. All this comes about as a result of something they initially disliked. God, thus, teaches them that what He chooses for them is the best thing. This also trains them to show absolute obedience.

God also tells them of other favors He will grant them. There will be more war gains: these they are unable to secure by virtue of their own forces, but which God will let them have by cause of His power and planning: *And other gains which are not yet within your power. Surely, God enclosed them. And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:21)**

Again, reports differ as to what these gains refer to: is it to the conquest of Makkah? Or to Khaybar? Or is it the victories secured against the Byzantine and Persian Empires? Or does it refer to all other conquests achieved by the Muslim community after al-Hudaybiyah? Most probably, the Chapter refers here to the conquest of Makkah, which followed the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah and resulted from it. The peace treaty lasted only two years. Thereafter, the ungrateful violated it, and God facilitated Makkah's conquest for the Muslims, with hardly any fighting. It was Makkah that had continued to present great difficulties for the Muslim community in Madinah. It had attacked them twice, and was able to turn them away from the Sacred Mosque when they tried to visit it prior to signing the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyah. God, however, overwhelmed Makkah with His

power, handing it over to the Muslims without fighting: *And God had been over everything Powerful.* **(48:21)** This was, then, an implicit piece of happy news. It was left undefined because at the time when the Chapter was revealed, it still belonged to the future, which is part of the realm that lies beyond human perception. Therefore, God gives them this hint to reassure them and help them to look forward to what may be coming their way.

In line with the reference to the present war gains and the future ones they await, the Chapter clearly tells the Muslims that they will be victorious. The signing of the peace treaty was in no way due to their weakness, or because the ungrateful were too strong for them. Instead, it was meant to happen for a definite purpose God wanted to achieve. Had the ungrateful fought them, they would have been crushed. Such is the rule whenever the believers and ungrateful meet in a decisive battle:

Were the ungrateful to fight you, they would have turned their back inflight. *And if those who were ungrateful fought you, they would have turned their backs. Again, they would not have found a protector or a helper. This is a custom of God which was, surely, in force before. You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:22-48:23)**

Thus, victory for the believers and defeat of their enemies are part of the universal law God has set in operation. It is unchangeable. This is bound to give the believers immense confidence and reassurance. They know that God's law will never fail to operate. It may be delayed for some time, for reasons that are closely related to the adherence of the believers to the way God wants them to adhere, or for reasons that bring about the conditions that lead to victory for the believers against the ungrateful. There may be other reasons known to God for such delay, but God's law will continue to operate, without fail: *You will never find in a custom of God any substitution.* **(48:23)**

God also reminds them of His favor when he stayed the ungrateful' hands from the Muslims, and stayed the Muslims' hands after they had gained victory over their attackers. This refers to an incident when about forty of the ungrateful tried to launch an offensive. They were taken prisoner, but the Messenger pardoned them: *And He it is who limited their hands from you and your hands from them in the hollow of Makkah after He made you victors over them. And God had been Seeing of what you do.* **(48:24)**

This was an event the addressees witnessed, but God mentions it in this way to refer every move and every happening to His direct planning. They, thus, feel how God's hand directs everything for them, guides their footsteps and their feelings. They will then un-

hesitatingly surrender themselves to Him. They will be absolutely certain that everything is in God's hand, and that His choice is the best. They move according to His will in everything they choose or refuse. He wants only what is best for them. When they surrender to Him, every good thing comes their way easily and without delay. He sees them and knows the ins and outs of their situation. What He chooses for them is based on His perfect knowledge. He will not let anything they deserve escape them: *And God had been Seeing of what you do.* **(48:24)**

### EXPOSING THE UNGRATEFUL

The Chapter then tells the believers about their opponents' position in Gods sight. It explains how God considers the ungrateful actions as they turn the believers away from His Sacred House, and how He looks at the believers in a totally different way from these others: *They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice. If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge. This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment. Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* **(48:25-48:26)**

According to Gods measure, they are truly ungrateful, deserving this repugnant description: *They were ungrateful.* **(48:25)** This is recorded against them as if they are the only ones in this class, confirmed in ingratitude. Therefore, they deserve to be disliked by God who hates ingratitude and the ungrateful. Their other obnoxious deed of turning the believers away from the Sacred Mosque and forbidding the sacrificial animals from reaching their destination is also recorded: *They were ungrateful, and they barred you from the Masjid al-Haram, and were ones who detained the sacrificial gift from reaching its place of sacrifice.* **(48:25)** This amounted to gross misconduct according to the Quranic message and pre-Quranic traditions; it was gross according to all religions known in the Arabian Peninsula since the time of Abraham, their great ancestor.

Restraining the believers from fighting them was not, then, out

of compassion or because their fault was small. It was for a different purpose which God explains to the believers: *If it had not been for men, ones who believe, and for women, ones who believe, whom you know not that you tread on them and guilt should light on you without your knowledge.* **(48:25)** There were a number of Muslims in Makkah who could not migrate to Madinah because of their weak position, and did not declare their acceptance of the Quranic message for fear of persecution by the ungrateful. Had the Muslims attacked Makkah and a fight taken place, the Muslims might have killed some of these since they did not know who they were. This would have meant Muslims killing Muslims; a situation that must be avoided. Moreover, the Muslims would have had to pay blood money to their families when it became known that they were Muslim.

Besides, God knew that among the ungrateful who prevented the Muslims"entry into the Sacred Mosque were some who would be good believers, and who would earn God's mercy. Had these two groups been separated from the rest of the ungrateful, God would have allowed the Muslims to attack and He would have punished the ungrateful severely: *This was so that God may cause to enter into His mercy whomever He wills. If they were clearly apart, separated, We would have punished those who were ungrateful among them with a painful punishment.* **(48:25)**

The Chapter then provides a further description of the ungrateffuls, showing their inner feelings after it has given an account of their apparent deeds: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance.* **(48:26)** This was not a passion for a particular faith or code of living, but rather a fury of arrogance and rigidity. This same fury led them to oppose the entry of the Messenger and his Companions to the Sacred Mosque, as also prevented the sacrificial animals from reaching their place of sacrifice. They were thus in breach of every tradition and religion. That they were prepared to commit such a breach had everything to do with their standing among all the Arab tribes so that it could not be said that Muhammad entered Makkah in spite of them. Because of such ignorant passion, they perpetrated this gross offense against all tradition and all religion. They were prepared to violate the sanctity of the Sacred Mosque, which gave them their own special position in Arabia, as well as the sanctity of the sacred months, which was observed under Quranic and pre-Quranic traditions. Their fury and ignorance was clearly apparent in their harsh response to everyone who suggested that they pursue a line of compromise, criticizing their plan to prevent Muhammad and his Companions from entering the Mosque. This fury again manifested itself in the ungrate-

ful negotiator, Suhayl ibn Amr's objection to include in the treaty God's attributes, the Lord of Grace, the Ever Merciful, or the Messenger s status as God's Messenger. Such a hardened attitude could only have been the result of fury, ignorance and arrogance.

God left them to their fury and ignorance because He knew their adamant refusal to submit to the truth. At the same time, He protected the believers from entertaining such passion, giving them instead feelings of tranquillity and piety: *Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness.* **(48:26)** Calm tranquillity and piety are fine qualities suited to a believing heart which feels its bond with God, reassured by it. A person with such qualities always places his trust in God, and watches God in everything he says or does. Such a person does not behave arrogantly, nor do they let personal anger get the better of them. Instead, they are only motivated to anger in support of their faith and for God's sake. Therefore, if they are ordered to calm down, they willingly obey.

Therefore, the believers were most worthy and deserving of the word of piety. This is yet another point on which they are commended by God, who favored them with the tranquillity He bestowed on them. This is all an honor given to them by the One who knows them well: *And God had been Knowing.* **(48:26)**

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

What does the Quranic message say we should do with those who take their way of life (din, religion) as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded? *Forsake those who took to themselves their way of life as a pastime and as a diversion and whom this present life deluded. But remind with it, the Quran, so that a soul would not be given up to destruction for what it earned. Other than God there is not for it a protector nor an intercessor. And even if it be an equitable equivalent, it will not be taken from it. Those are those who were given up to destruction for what they earned. For them is a drink of scalding water and a painful punishment because they had been ungrateful.* (6:70)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what we are reading, hearing or thinking.

Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.

Question the relevance of what we are studying.

Probe the evidence for and against what others say.

Question myself and others.

## INTERLUDE 2

## THE BATTLE OF HUNAYN

The conquest of Makkah, which had been the largest base of idolatry, frightens the tribes who lived at a distance from Makkah. They realize that the power of the Quranic message would soon reach their area. They are afraid the Messenger himself will come to destroy their idols, as the Messenger had sent Khalid to destroy the idol and temple to 'Uzza at Nakhlah, or send forces against them. Thus tribes which live near each other decide to prevent the entrance of the army of the Messenger by banding together and creating a strong military force themselves. They had learned from past experience that if they remain in their homes when an enemy attacks, they will be met by very bitter events. They all decide to move to fight the Messenger. They stop in an area called Hunayn. A report reaches the Messenger that the Hawazan and other tribes are on the move. The Messenger sends a stranger among them to receive a report about the truth of the matter. The report back to him makes him decide to move against the tribes with 12,000 men, 2,000 of whom are the newly converted to the Quranic message from among the Makkan idol worshippers.

The Messenger leaves Makkah on the 6th of Shawwal. He sends Khalid ibn Walid ahead as the commander of the front forces, but the Hawazan and their allies who had previously hidden in the mountains and valleys of Hunayn and had taken up positions, suddenly attack the Muslim forces. The front forces retreat. Others follow them and then disperse.

It is at this time that Abu Sufyan and other idol-worshippers who appear to have accepted the Quranic message begin to speak. Abu Sufyan says: Those who fled will go as far as the sea. Habalah ibn Hanbal says: Today the spell has been broken. Shiybah, whose father had been killed at Uhud, says: I will kill Muhammad today in revenge for the death of my father.

The fleeing of the front forces causes each of the forces which followed to also flee and the army to loose its order. The Messenger is able to give some sense of organization to the army. He turns to those who are fleeing and says: Where are you running? Return for I am the Messenger of God, Muhammad ibn Abd Allah. He then commands his uncle Abbas, who has a loud and clear voice, to cry out: O Companions of the Pledge of Ridwan, pledged to the Messenger under the tree, return to him.

The persistence of the Messenger and cries of Abbas cause one after another of the Muslims to gather around Muhammad and begin the battle again. The Muslim army little by little is reorganized making sure the Messenger is out of range of the enemies arrows.

Eight Muslims are martyred but more than 6000 from the Hawazin and other tribes are taken prisoner. In addition, the spoils include 24,000 camels, more than 40,000 sheep and 582 kilos of silver.

**HISTORY**

Whether from the rumor of Khalid's sanguinary treatment of the Bani Jadzima, or from fear of the Messenger generally, and jealousy of his aggressive career, the great and warlike tribe of the Hawazin resolved to anticipate any attack upon their liberties, by themselves assuming an offensive front. They appointed a rendezvous at Autas, a valley between Makkah and Taif, where they began rapidly to assemble.

This movement obliged the Messenger to cut short his stay at Makkah. Although the city had cheerfully accepted his leadership, all its inhabitants had not yet embraced the new religion, or formally acknowledged his prophetical claim. Perhaps he intended to follow the course he bad pursued at Madinah, and leave the conversion of the people to be gradually accomplished without compulsion. However this may have been, the threatening intelligence from Taif called him away from Makkah after little more than a fortnight's stay. Muadh ibn Jabal a young citizen of Madinah, well skilled in the Quran and in all questions of religious practice, was left behind to instruct the Makkans in the tenets and requirements of the message; and Attab a youthful man, of the house of Abd Shams, was placed over the secular administration of the city.

Four weeks had just elapsed since he had left Madinah, when the Messenger marched forth from Makkah at the head of all his forces, swelled now, by the addition of two auxiliaries from Makkah, to the large number of twelve thousand men. Safwan at his request made over to him one hundred suits of mail and stand of arms complete, and as many camels. The array of tribes, each with a banner waving at its head, was so imposing, that Abu Bakr broke forth, as the marshaled forces passed, with the exclamation: We shall not this day be worsted by reason of the smallness of our numbers! The Messenger smiled with his assent.

The vainglorious boast was remembered by Prophet afterwards with self-reproach. In three four marches the army arrived near the entrance of the valley of Hunayn.

The greater part of the tribes of the Hawazin Tribe, including the Thaqif Clan, who inhabited Taif, having rallied round their chief, Malik ibn Awf, at Autas, had meanwhile also been advancing upon the valley of Hunayn. The women and children, the property, herds, and flocks, of the Hawazin, followed in their rear. Malik hoped, by the presence of their families, and consciousness of the disastrous results of a defeat, to nerve his troops to victory. Doreid, a very aged warrior, who accompanied the army in his litter, protested against the fatal measure. But the youthful leader derided his advice. During the night, after the Messenger's arrival in the vicinity of Hunayn, Malik drew up his men in a masked position, commanding a steep and narrow defile, which formed the entrance to the valley, and awaited in silence the approach of the enemy.

Very early in the· morning, while the dawn was yet gray, and the sky overcast the army of the Messenger was in motion. Clad in a full panoply, as on the day of Uhud, he rode on his white mule, Duldul, towards the rear of the forces. (10th Shawwal 8 AH) The vanguard, formed of the Sulaym Clan, and led by Khalid, were defiling leisurely up the steep and narrow pass, when suddenly the Hawazin rushed forth from their ambuscade, and charged them with impetuosity. Staggered by the unexpected onslaught, the Sulaym Clan broke and fell back. The shock was communicated from column tc column.

Aggravated by the obscurity of the hour, and the straitness and ruggedness of the road, panic seized the whole army: all turned and fled. As troop by troop they hurried past him, the Messenger called out: Whither away? The Prophet of the Lord is here! Return! return!- but his words had no effect, excepting that a band of devoted friends and followers gathered round him. The confusion increased, the multitude of camels jostled wildly one against another; all was noise and clamor, and the voice of the Messenger was lost amid the confusion.

At last, seeing the column of Madinah troops bearing down in the common flight, he bade his uncle Abbas, who held his mule, to cry aloud: O citizens of Madinah! O men of the Tree of Fealty! Abbas had a stentorian voice and as he shouted these words over and over again at the pitch of his voice, they were heard far and near. At once they touched a chord in the hearts of the men of Madinah. They were arrested in their flight, and, like she-camels when their bowels are stirred towards their young, hastened to the Messenger, crying aloud: *Labayk! Labayk!* One hundred of these devoted followers, disengaged with difficulty from the camels that jammed the narrow pass, threw themselves upon the advancing enemy, and checked his progress.

Relieved from the pressure, the army rallied gradually, and returned to the battle. The conflict was severe: and the issue, from the adverse nature of the ground and the impetuosity of the wild Bedouins, remained for some time doubtful. The Messenger ascended an eminence, and watched the struggle. Excited by the spectacle, he began loudly to exclaim: Now is the furnace heated: I am the Prophet that lies not. I am the son of Abd al-Muttalib! Then bidding Abbas to pick up for him a handful of gravel, he cast it towards the enemy, saying: Ruin seize them!

They had indeed already wavered. They are discomfited, he cried out eagerly: I swear by the Lord of the Kabah! God has cast fear into their hearts. The steadiness of the Madinah band, and the enthusiasm of the rest when once recalled to their duty, had won the day. The enemy fled, and the rout was complete. Many were slain..

Malik, taking his stand with the followers of his army upon a height at the further end of the valley, covered the escape of his broken forces; but he was unable to rescue the women and children. They fell into the hands of the Messenger, with the camp and all that it contained. Six thousand prisoners were taken and the spoil included twenty-four thousand camels, forty thousand sheep and goats, and four thousand ounces of silver. The prisoners and the booty were removed to the valley of Jierrina, and kept there in the shelter of huts and enclosures, awaiting the return of the army from Taif. the Messenger knew that the Bani Hawazin would seek to regain their families, and an opportunity was skilfully left open for negotiation.

The fugitive army was pursued with slaughter as far as Nakhla; from there part fled back to Autas, and part to Taif. The former entrenched themselves in their previous camp. A strong detachment was sent to dislodge them, which they accomplished after severe fighting, and the loss of their leader from the wound of an arrow. The dispersed fragments of the enemy found refuge in the surrounding hills.

The victory was thus complete, but not without some considerable loss on the part of the Messenger. Only five of his immediate followers are named among the slain. But some of the auxiliaries must have suffered greatly; for two tribes are spoken of as almost annihilated. For these the Messenger offered up a special prayer, and said: O Lord! Recompense them because of their calamities.

The reverse sustained at the opening of the day was attributed by the Prophet to the vainglorious confidence with which the believers looked upon their great army. The subsequent success was equally ascribed to the aid of invisible hosts which fought against the enemy. The engagement is thus alluded to in the Quran. (9:26-9:28).

As soon as the detachment had returned from Autas, the Messenger pushed forward his army by way of Nakhla, and laid siege to Taif. But the city was surrounded by strong battlements; it was provisioned for many months, and there was a plentiful supply of water within the walls. The besiegers were received with showers of arrows, so thick and well sustained that they are described as darkening the sky like a swarm of locusts. It was soon discovered that the camp was pitched too near the city. Twelve men were killed, and many wounded, among whom was a son of Abu Bakr. The encampment was speedily withdrawn beyond the range of the enemy's archery. A tent was erected for Umm Salmah, and another for Zaynab. Both had followed the Messenger through all the dangers of the way. Between these tents the Messenger performed the daily prayers; and on this spot the great Mosque of Taif was afterwards erected.

The siege did not advance, for no one dared to expose himself before the galling archery from the walls. This had been anticipated, and a remedy already sought. The Bani Daws, who lived at some distance south of Makkah, were famous for their acquaintance with the use of the testudo and catapult. Tufayl, one of their chiefs, had joined the Messenger at Khaybar with a party of his tribe. He had lately been despatched from Makkah or Hunayn to secure the allegiance of his people, and to seek their aid in the reduction of Taif. They accepted the summons; and Tufayl, having burned their tutelary image, the famous Dhu al-Kaffein, joined the Messenger four day after siege had been laid to Taif. The besieging engines were speedil prepared, and parties pushed forward under cover of them. But th citizens were prepared for the stratagem. They cast down balls of heated iron from the battlements, and set the machines on· fire. The soldiers laboring under their shelter fled in alarm. A discharge of arrows opened upon them; some were killed, and many wounded before they escaped be yond their range. The testudo and catapult were not tried again.

Seeing no other way of bringing the city to terms, the Messenger gave command to cut down and burn the far-famed vineyards which surrounded the place. This order was being carried into effect, as the unfortunate citizens from the wall could descry, with merciless vigor, when they succeeded in conveying to the Messenger an earnest expostulation; they besought for the sake of mercy and of God, that he would desist. He listened to the appeal, and stayed farther destruction. But he caused a proclamation to reach the garrison which grievously displeased them, that if any POW/slaves came forth from the city, they would receive their freedom. Only ten men however were able to avail themselves of the offer.

The siege had now been protracted for half a month without producing the slightest effect. The army was beginning to exhibit symptoms of im patience, and of anxiety for the distribution of the spoils at Jierrana. The Messenger took counsel with the principal men: What do you think, said he to Naufal, the Duilite, what do you think of this stubborn city? A fox in its hole, replied the astute and sententious chief. Remain long enough and you will catch it: leave it alone, and it will not harm you. A dream was seen by the Prophet which ratified this view. It was not the divine will that operations should be continued. The siege was therefore raised, and the army marched back to Madinah, which it reached about the end of February.

Here occurred an interesting incident, already described in the opening chapter of this work, an aged female among the captives, being roughly treated like the rest, warned the rude soldiery to beware. For, said she: I am the foster-sister of your chief. Hearing this, they carried her to the Messenger, who recognized in the complainant the little girl that used to tend and carry him, when he was nurtured by Halima, among the Saad Clan. He seated her affectionately beside him, and offered to take her to Madinah. But she preferred remaining with her tribe. And accordingly he dismissed her with a handsome present.

Encouraged by the kind treatment of their kin woman, a deputation from the various tribes of Hawazm presented themselves before the Prophet. Among them was an aged man who claimed to be his foster-uncle. They professed their submission to the authority of their conqueror, recounted the calamities which bad befallen them, and thus urged their special claims to favor: There, in these huts among the prisoners, are your foster mothers and foster sisters, they that have nursed you and fondled you in their bosoms. We have known you a suckling, a weaned child, a youth generous and noble: and now you have listened to this dignity. Be gracious therefore unto us, even as the Lord has been gracious unto you. The Messenger could not withstand the appeal. Turning kindly to them, he said: Whether of the two, your families or your property, is the dearer to you?

Our women and our children, they replied; we would not give anything in exchange for them. Then, continued the Prophet, whatsoever prisoners fall to my portion and that of my family, I give them up unto you: and I will presently speak unto the people concerning the rest. Come again unto me at the mid-day prayer, when they are assembled, and beg publicly of me to make intercession with them for you.

At the appointed time they appeared and made their petition.

The men of Madinah and of Makkah cheerfully followed the example of the Messenger. But some of the allies, as the Tamim Clan, and the Fazara Clan, with Uyayna at their head, declined to do so. the Messenger urged the claims of his new converts, and promised that such of the allies as were unwilling to part with their share of the prisoners should be recompensed hereafter from the first booty the Lord might give into their hands, at the rate of six camels for every captive. To this they agreed, and the prisoners were all released.

Among the captives were three beautiful women, who were brought to the Messenger. One, named Reeta, was presented by him Umar, to Ali; the second, Zaynab, to Uthman; and the third to Umar. Umar transferred the latter to his son Abd Allah, who returned her uninjured to the tribe, when the prisoners were given up. Whether the other two were restored likewise is not stated: but be this as it may, it throws a strange light on the domestic history of the Messenger, that he should have presented such gifts as captive women to the father of one of his wives, and the husbands of two of his own daughters.

Having arranged for the restoration of the prisoners, the Messenger had already mounted his camel and was proceeding to his tent, when the people, fearing lest the spoil, as well as the prisoners, should slip from their grasp, crowded round him with loud cries: Distribute to us the booty, the camels and the flocks. The crowd thronged him so closely and so rudely, that he was driven to seek for refuge under a tree. While thus pressed on every side, his mantle was torn from his shoulders. Return to me my mantle, O man! cried the Messenger, who had now secured a more free position. Return my mantle: for I swear by the Lord that if the sheep and the camels were as many as the trees of the Tihima in number, I would divide them all amongst you. You have not heretofore found me miserly or false. Then he plucked a hair from his camel's hump, and holding it aloft said: Even to a hair like this, I shall not keep back aught but the fifth, and that, too, I give up unto you. The people were pacified, and the Messenger went on his way.

He took an early opportunity of making good his promise, and at the same time of gaining, by a princely liberality, the hearts of the leading Chiefs of Makkah and of the Bedouin tribes. To those of the greatest influence, he presented each one hundred camels. Among them we find Abu Sufyan, with his two sons, Yazid and Muawiyah; Hakim ibn Hizam, Safwan, Suhayl, Huwaytib, Uyayna, and several others, who but a few weeks before were the Prophet's deadly enemies. To the lesser chiefs he gave fifty camels each. And so liberal was he that, in some instance where discontent was expressed with

the amount, the gift was without hesitation doubled.

Although the largesses were taken from the Prophet's fifth, yet the favor and honor lavished the older followers on these recent and doubtful adherents, gave great umbrage to the old and faithful followers of the Messenger. Thus one complained that such Bedouin chieftains as Aera and Uyayna received each one hundred camels, while a faithful believer like Juayl got nothing at all.

And what of that? replied the Prophet. I swear that Juayl is the best man that ever stepped on earth, but I wished to gain over the hearts of these men to the Quranic message, while Juayl has no need of any such inducement.

A man of the Bani Tamim, who watched the proceeding, openly impugned its equity. The Messenger became angry, and said: Out upon you. If justice and equity be not with me, where will you find them? But what concerned the Messenger the most, were the murmurs of the citizens of Madinah. Truly, thus they spake among themselves, he has now joined his own people and forsaken us. The discontent proceeded so far that Saad ibn Ubaydah thought right to represent it to the Prophet, who bade him call the murmurers together. He then addressed them in these words: You men of Madinah, it has been reported to me that you are disconcerted because I have given unto these chiefs largesses, and have given nothing unto you. Now speak unto me. Did I not come unto you while you were wandering, and the Lord gave you the right direction? needy, and he enriched you; at enmity amongst yourselves, and He has filled your hearts with love and unity?

He paused for a reply. Indeed, it is even as you say, they answered; to the Lord and to his Prophet belong benevolence and grace.

Nay, by the Lord! continued the Messenger. But ye might have answered (and answered truly, for I would have verified it myself,)- You came to Madinah rejected as an impostor, and we bore witness to your veracity:you came a helpless fugitive and we assisted you; an outcast, and we gave you an asylum; destitute, and we solaced you Why are you disturbed in mind because of the things of this life, wherewith I have sought to incline the hearts of these men to the Quranic message, whereas ye are already stedfast in your faith? Are you not satisfied that others should obtain the flocks and the camels, while you carry back the Prophet of the Lord unto your homes? No, I will not leave you forever. If all humanity went one way, and the men of Madinah another way, verily I would go the way of the men of Madinah. The Lord be favorable unto them, and bless them, and their sons and their sons' sons forever! At these words all wept, till the tears ran down upon their beards; and they called out with one

voice: Yea, we are well satisfied, O Prophet, with our lot!

It will be seen that the Messenger made no attempt to hide the motive which dictated these generous gifts. The chiefs who received them are referred to in the Quran as those whose hearts have been gained over; .and they retained the appellation ever after. (9:60-9:62)

Malik, the chief who had led the Hawazin Clan, was still in Taif. The Messenger desired to gain him over also. So he directed his tribe to make known to him that if he embraced the Quranic message, his family and all his property would be restored, and a present of one hundred camels bestowed upon him. He soon joined the Messenger and became an exemplary believer. Being confirmed in his chiefship, he engaged to maintain a constant warfare with the citizens of Tai£ He cut off their cattle whenever they were sent beyond the precincts of the city to graze, and reduced them to great straits.t

The Messenger spent about a fortnight at Jierrina during which period the booty captured at Hunayn was all distributed. Four camels and forty sheep or goats, fell to the lot of each foot soldier, and three times that amount to each horseman.

The distribution being ended, the Messenger took upon him the pilgrim vows, and fulfilled the Lesser Pilgrimage (*umra*) at Makkah. But he made no stay there. He returned to Jierrana that same night; and the following day, striking through the valleys by a direct route, joined at Sarif the main road, and marched homewards to Madinah.

The youthful Attab was confirmed in the Government of Makkah, and an allowance assigned him of one dirhem a day. Attab presided over the annual pilgrimage, which took place in less than a month after the Messenger's departure. Believers and idolaters were still permitted to join promiscuously in its ceremonies. Mudha was left behind by the Prophet to complete the spiritual instruction of the city.

After leaving Jierrana, the Messenger despatched letters to the Chiefs of Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen.

## Lesson 111(4) Critical Thinking Strategy
## Deep Questioning

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

## Quranic Chapter 48: The Victory (al-Fath)
## Signs 48:27-48:29

**Madinah:** *Certainly, God was sincere*
*to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth:*
*You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed,*
*as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads*
*or as ones whose hair is cut short.*
*You will fear not.*
*He knew what you know not*
*and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand.* (48:27)
*He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance*
*and the way of life of The Truth*
*that He uplift it over all of the ways of life.*
*And God sufficed as a witness.* (48:28)
*Muhammad is the Messenger of God.*
*And those who are with him are severe*
*against the one who is ungrateful,*
*but compassionate among themselves.*
***You** have seen them as ones who bow down*
*as ones who prostrate themselves.*
*They are looking for grace from God and contentment.*
*Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration.*
*This is their parable in the Torah.*
*And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed*
*that brought out its shoot, energized.*
*It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk*
*impressing the ones who sow*
*so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,*
*God promised those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* (48:29)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE MESSENGERS TRUE VISION

We have already learnt that some of the Messenger's Companions on this trip, who were delighted with his dream knowing that Messengers' dreams always come true, found it hard that his dream should not be fulfilled that year, and that they would be prevented entry to the Sacred Mosque. God assured them, however, that the Messenger's dream was true Muhammad ibn Maslamah went ahead with horses and arms until he arrived at Marr al-Zahran, about one days travel, by camel, from Makkah. There he found a few men from the ungrateful who were greatly worried at what they saw. They thought that he was about to attack Makkah in violation of the peace treaty, which stipulated that there would be no war between the two sides for ten years. When the Messenger encamped at Marr al-Zahran where he could see the idols placed in the Sacred Mosque, he sent all the Muslims' arms, including bows, arrows and spears to a place called Batn Yajuj. He then marched towards Makkah with his Companions having only their swords in their sheaths, as he had promised the people of Makkah.

The ungrateful then sent Mikraz ibn Hafs at the head of a delegation to the Messenger. They said to him: Muhammad, we have never known you to break a promise ever since you were a young child. He asked why they were saying this. They replied: You are trying to enter the city carrying all your arms; spears, bows and arrows. The Messenger said: I am not going to carry arms into the city. We have sent them to Batn Yajuj. Mikraz ibn Hafs then replied: This is more like what we know of your faithfulness.

Many of the ungrateful nobility left Makkah and went into the surrounding mountains; this because they did not wish to look at the Muslims as they arrived at the city for worship. Indeed, the very sight infuriated them. The rest of the Makkans were either out in the streets or on rooftops looking at the Messenger and his Companions as they entered repeating their phrases that declared their submission to God. The Messenger was riding his she-camel, al-Qaswa which he rode the previous year. His Companion, Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, held the she-camel's rein and guided its march.

Thus the Messenger's dream came true and God's promise was fulfilled. *Certainly, God was sincere to the dream of His Messenger with The Truth: You will enter the Masjid al-Haram, if God willed, as ones who are safe, as ones who shaved your heads or as ones whose hair is cut short. You will fear not. He knew what you know not and He assigned other than that a victory near at hand.* **(48:27)** The following year witnessed the fall of Makkah to the Quranic mes-

sage, and the divine faith came to reign in Makkah, then throughout the rest of Arabia. Then God's other promise and the other piece of good news were fulfilled: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life.* **(48:28)** The Quranic message of Truth prevailed, and not only in the Arabian Peninsula. Within half a century it prevailed across much of the inhabited parts of the earth. It subdued the entire Persian Empire and took over much of the Byzantine Empire. It marched as far as India and China before moving into Malaysia, southern Asia and Indonesia. In the sixth and seventh centuries, these areas constituted most of the then known world.

This Quranic message continues to prevail over all religions, even after its political retreat from much of the areas it moved into, particularly in Europe and the major islands in the Mediterranean. It prevails even though the power of its people is very weak compared to the new powers that have recently emerged in the East and the West. Indeed, as a religion, the Quranic message prevails over all else. It carries within itself and in its nature the elements of its strength. It moves forward, supported by neither sword nor gun drawn by its people. Its advance is due only to its inherent harmony with human nature and the natural laws of the universe, and to the fact that it satisfies, with perfect ease, the requirements of mind and soul, progress and civilization, regardless of whether people live in tents or in skyscrapers.

Any religious person who looks objectively at the Quranic message is bound to recognize the soundness and inherent strength of this religion. Nor can they help but recognize its ability to lead humanity with wisdom and to answer its progressive needs in an easy and straightforward way: *And God sufficed as a witness.* **(48:28)**

We see, then, that God's promise was fulfilled in the immediate, political form, before one century had elapsed after the Messenger's mission. God's promise continues to be fulfilled in its substantive form, as the Quranic message prevails over all other messages. In fact, it is the only message that continues to act and lead in all situations. Perhaps only the Muslims do not understand this truth. Other people know it and take it into account as they draw up their policies and programmes.

### THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

The Chapter concludes with a sign that paints a superb picture of the community of the Messenger's Companions, adding God's commendation of that unique and happy group of people who earned His pleasure and who were also informed of that fact: Muhammad

is God's Messenger; and those who are with him are firm and unyielding towards the ungrateful, full of mercy towards one another. You can see them bowing down, prostrating in prayer, seeking favor with God and His good pleasure. They bear on their faces the marks of their prostrations. This is how they are pictured in the Torah. And in the Gospels, they are like a seed that brings forth its shoot, strengthens it, grows thick and stands firm on its stem, delighting the sowers. Through them God will enrage the ungrateful. *God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* **(48:29)**

This is a remarkable picture drawn by the superior style of the Quran. It includes several snapshots depicting the groups main conditions, both subtle and clearly apparent. One shot portrays their attitude to the ungrateful and to one another. Thus, they are: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God. And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* Another shows them as they are in worship: *You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves.* Yet a third image reveals what preoccupies their minds and characterizes their feelings: *They are looking for grace from God and contentment.* A fourth shot focuses on the apparent effect worship has on their faces as they dedicate all to God: *Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration. This is their parable in the Torah.* A number of additional quick images tell us how they are described in the Gospels: *And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized. It, then, became stout and rose straight on its plant stalk impressing the ones who sow so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,*

The sign begins by confirming the Messenger's status, denied by the ungrateful negotiator, Suhayl ibn Amr, and the ungrateful he represented at the time: *Muhammad is the Messenger of God.* The sign then goes on to paint its beautiful picture in the unique Quranic style.

Needless to say, the believers go through different conditions and situations during their lifetimes. However, the images shown in the verse concentrate on their permanent features, highlighting these so that they serve as the main lines in the overall picture. The selection of these particular images clearly shows that God wants to bestow honor on this happy community. This is reflected right from the very first image that depicts them as: *And those who are with him are severe against the one who is ungrateful, but compassionate among themselves.* They take such a firm and unyielding attitude towards the ungrateful, despite the fact that those ungrateful included

their parents, siblings, kinsfolk and friends. However, they severed all these relations with the ungrateful. They are at the same time full of mercy towards one another, when their only bond is brotherhood in faith. This means that in both conditions of unyielding firmness and flowing mercy the determining factor is faith. There is absolutely no personal consideration. Their feelings, emotions, behavior and bonds are based on faith alone, making them hostile to its opponents, compassionate towards their fellow believers. They discard all selfish thoughts and make their bond with God the only one to which they attach any value.

Again Gods wish to honor this community is clearly apparent in making prominent their condition as they worship: ***You have seen them as ones who bow down as ones who prostrate themselves.*** The way this is portrayed suggests that this is their permanent condition, one that we see whenever we look at them. In fact, bowing and prostration represent the condition of worship, which is the core feature of their personality. Therefore, it is expressed in a way that makes it permanent during their time, as if they spent their whole lives bowing and prostrating.

The same applies to the third image, which concentrates on their inner thoughts and feelings: *They are looking for grace from God and contentment.* Such are their permanent feelings and what always preoccupies them. All they aspire for is God's favor and earning His pleasure.

The fourth image focuses on how apparent worship and inner feelings are reflected in their appearances: *Their mark is on their faces from the effects of prostration.* Their faces shine with transparent clarity and the warmth that worship imparts. This is not a reference to the dark mark associated with prayer that appears on the foreheads of some people, as people may wrongly think when they hear the words, *the effects of prostration.*. What this expression refers to is the mark of worship, which is symbolized here by prostration as it expresses submission to God in the clearest form. The mark of this submission is seen on their races; in other words there is no trace of pride, arrogance or selfishness. Instead, what is reflected is noble humility, purity and a serenity that adds to the shine on a believers face.

This bright overall picture contains nothing new. It is also painted in the Torah as God gave the world the news of the emergence of this community of the Messenger's Companions.

The Gospels give another picture of Muhammad and his community, describing them as *And their parable in the Gospel is like sown seed that brought out its shoot, energized.* It is a fertile seed

that sends forth its shoot which does not weaken the stalk. On the contrary, it *It, then, became stout* or the shoot may be strengthened by the stalk. Thus the plant is energized, and its stem acquires strength and structure. The plant now *and rose straight on its plant stalk*,, upright, neither bending nor crooked. This is how the plant looks, but what feeling does it give to farmers who can immediately distinguish a fine plant that is bound to yield fruit? It gives them a feeling of pleasure: *impressing the ones who sow.* A variant reading of this phrase puts the delighted onlookers in the singular, *impressing the ones who sow* which in this case refers to the Messenger, as he was the one that looked after the seeds until they harvested a noble and delightful community that was unique in history. The ungrateful experience a different feeling as they look on: *so that He enrage by them the ones who are ungrateful,* Sending such a feeling of rage into the ungrateful' hearts is clearly intended. It suggests that the planting was by God or by His Messenger, so as to yield a harvest that accomplishes God s purpose in enraging His enemies.

Again this picture is nothing new. It was painted before Muhammad and his Companions began to walk the earth, in the Gospels as they herald the happy event of God sending Muhammad with His final message.

Thus does God record in His book the qualities of this sele group of the Messenger's Companions, so that it will be recognize by all creation. It remains the ideal and the role model for future generations, as the standard of faith they should emulate. In addition to all this honor, God gives them a promise of forgiveness for their sins and a supreme reward: *God promised those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality, for them forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* The promise is given in such general terms after highlighting their special features so as to make them the first to whom the general description applies. The honor granted them is more than enough for anyone, but God's favors and bounty are limitless, unending. Therefore, they are granted forgiveness and a rich reward.

Once more I try today, fourteen centuries after the event, to visualize the beaming faces and rejoicing hearts of those people as they received this great honor and promise bestowed on them by God. I try to see them as they look at their own picture painted by God in His Book. I look at them as they are on their way back from al-Hudaybiyah, when some of these signs were revealed and relayed to them; how they reflected on it, and how it touched their hearts and souls. I see them looking at one another, with each one seeing in his brother the mark of the grace he himself feels. I try again and again to live with them a moment of this splendid festival they experienced,

but how can one who was not present there share all that, except from afar? It can only be by a special favor of God's grace, bringing close that which is indeed far. Lord! You know that I aspire to a special gift of this unique favor.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quranic message (6:95-6:100) calls for the deep questioning of our believes. What information are we given about the creation? Can it be interpreted as coming from any other than God? How many concepts of creation can you nae from these verses? Can one assume that God had the jinn as associates in this endeavor? What are the implications of such a belief when God created them?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.

I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.

I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

# APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
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31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
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35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
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47 = 26
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51 = 10
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67 = 51
68 = 88
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70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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LALA BAKHTI

# CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

## THE YEAR 22 OF THE REVELATION (9 AH/630-631 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 22*

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Prophet Muhammad

## The Year 22 of the Revelation (9 AH/630-631 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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## APRIL 20, 1, 630 CE-APRIL 8, 631 CE

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# PREFACE

## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 22*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 9 AH/ca. April 20, 630 CE-April 8, 631 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits**. The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III: The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

### The Nine Intellectual Standards

1. Logic (reasonable: 'aqala, 'aql)
2. Definitiveness (to be precise: muhkama)
3. Connectedness (containing complexities and interrelationships: (muqtarin)
4. Appropriateness (to make relevant: sadid)
5. Worthiness (Focusing on the important, not trivial,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)

6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES

1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)
   - THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
   - DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
   - EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
   - DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY
2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)
   - CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
   - CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
   - READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
   - LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE
3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)
   - PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
   - REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
   - DEEP QUESTIONING
4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)
   - DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
   - DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
   - GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE
5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)
   - ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
   - MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
   - RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
   - NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES
6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)
   - COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: 'AQSATA)

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

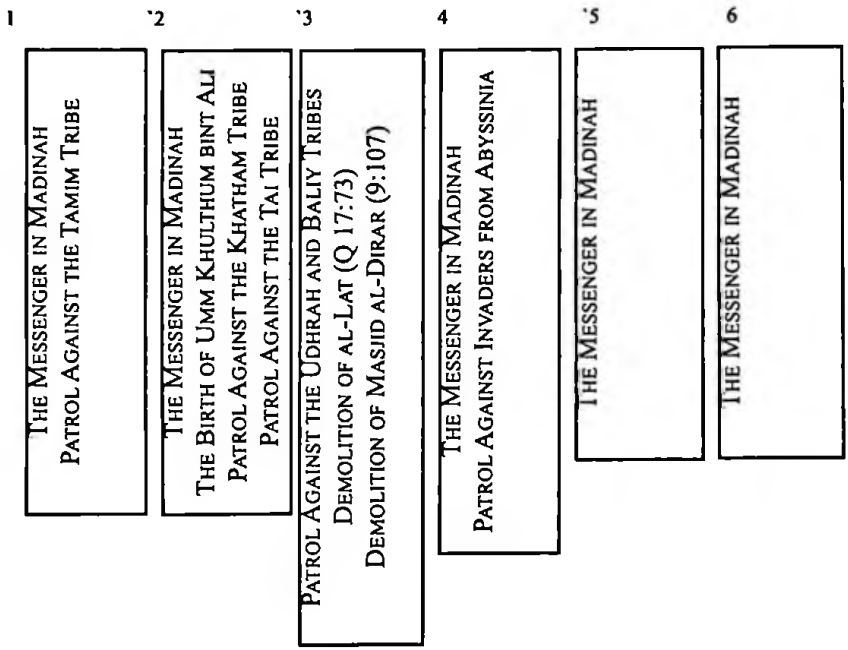
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 22*

## TIMELINE

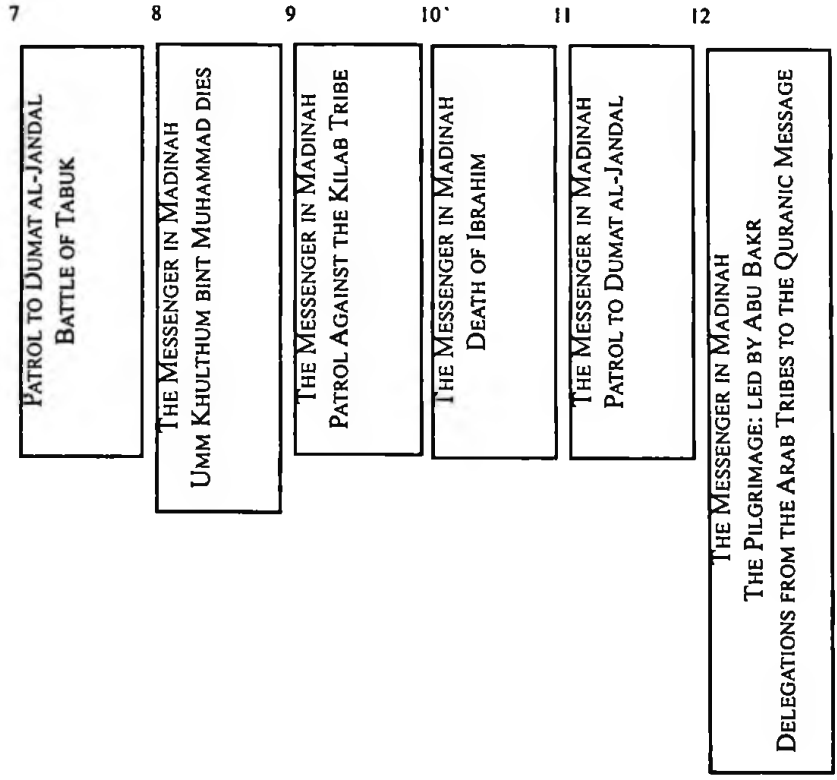



**Key**
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q = QURANIC SIGNS/VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# Preview *Book Year 22*

## Timeline




**Key**
7 = Rajab
8 = Shaban
9 = Ramadan
10 = Shawwal
11 = Dhu al-Qada
12 = Dhu al-Hijja

Q = Quranic Signs/Verses
Campaign, Battle Siege = Led by the Messenger
Patrol = The Messenger Does Not Participate and Commands a Companion to Lead

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 22* presented here begins with Lesson 112 and Quranic Chapter 5, the 112th chapter revealed.

## LESSON 112(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS

**OW TO USE INFORMATION WILL BECOME CLEAR BY ANSWERING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:**

Is this a fact or an ideal?
Are things always this way, or is this statement an expression of what people are trying to achieve?
Are these ideals yours?
Why or why not?
How have people attempted to achieve this ideal?
When did they not meet the ideal? Why?
What problems did they have?
Why? How can we better achieve these ideals?

How is this supposed to work in theory? Why?
What result is it supposed to have?
Why is that considered good?
How does this really work? Why?
What incorrect assumption is made in the theory?
What reasons are there for accepting this as it is?
For trying to make it closer to the ideal?
Is the way we actually do this justified? Why or why not?
If it is not justified, how can we correct it?

Have you ever thought something was true about yourself and acted in a way that was inconsistent with your ideal self?
Did you see yourself differently then?
Did you make efforts to change your behavior?
Can anyone think of ways to be more consistent?
Why is it often hard to be honest about yourself and the groups you belong to?

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:1-5:5

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Live up to your agreements.*
*Flocks of animals were permitted to you,*
*but what is now recounted to you:*
*You are not ones who are permitted hunting*

*while you are in pilgrim sanctity.*
*Truly, God gives judgment how He wants.* (5:1)
*O those who believed!*
*Profane not the waymarks of God nor the Sacred Month*
*nor the sacrificial gift nor the garlanded*
*nor ones who are bound for the Sacred House*
*looking for grace from their Lord and contentment.*
*And when you left your pilgrim sanctity, then, hunt.*
*And let not that you detest a folk who barred you*
*from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits.*
*And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct*
*and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin*
*and deep seated dislike.*
*And be conscious of God.*
*Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (5:2)
*Carrion was forbidden to you and blood and flesh of swine*
*and what of it was hallowed to other than God*
*and the one that is a strangled beast*
*and the one that is beaten to death and the animal one*
*fallen to its death and the animal gored to death*
*or eaten by a beast of prey—but what you slew lawfully—*
*and what were sacrificed to fetishes and what you partition*
*by divining arrows.*
*That is contrary to moral law.*
*Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope*
*because of your way of life.*
*So dread them not but dread Me.*
*Today, I perfected your way of life for you*
*and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you*
*and I was well-pleased with submission*
*to the One God for your way of life.*
*Whoever was driven by necessity due to emptiness—*
*not one who inclines to sin*
*then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (5:3)
*They ask **you** what was permitted to them.*
*Say: That which is good was permitted to you*
*and what you taught of hunting creatures,*
*as one who teaches hunting dogs of what God taught you.*
*So eat of what they seized for you*
*and remember the Name of God over it*
*and be conscious of God.*
*Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* (5:4)
*Today, what is good was permitted to you.*

*The food of those to whom We gave the Book is allowed to you*
*and your food is allowed to them.*
*And the ones who are free, chaste females from the females,*
*ones who believe and the ones who are free,*
*chaste females from among those who were given the Book*
*before you when you were to give them their bridal due,*
*as males, ones who seek wedlock,*
*not as ones who are licentious males,*
*nor as males, ones who take lovers to themselves.*
*And whoever disbelieves after belief, then, surely,*
*his actions will be fruitless.*
*And he in the world to come will be*
*among the ones who are losers.* (5:5)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROLOGUE

The Quran was bestowed from on high to Muhammad, God's Messenger, so that he might, by means of it, establish a state, bring a community into being, organize a society, cultivate minds and consciences and set moral values. The Quran was also to set the bonds that would operate within the Muslim community, as also define the international relations the Muslim state might have. All these were to be firmly joined together, so that all their parts would form one coherent whole, stemming from a single source and referring to a single authority. This is, in fact, the nature of religion, as defined by God and practiced by Muslims in the days when they were indeed truly Muslims.

Therefore, we find in this Chapter a whole host of topics interlinked by the main goal the Quran was revealed to achieve, namely, social organization on the basis of a well-defined concept formulated by faith. Such a concept looks up to God for all its laws, values, standards and code of living and maintains that all Godhead, Lordship and authority belong to God alone.

We also find in this Chapter 5 a clear effort to formulate concepts of belief, pure, purged of all traces of idolatrous superstition, and distortion perpetrated by followers of earlier divine religions. Moreover, the Muslim community is made fully aware of its true nature, its role, the course it must follow and the difficulties that it involves. It is also alerted to the wicked designs of its enemies who are certainly hostile to its faith. The Chapter also includes rulings concerning some of its worship rituals, specifically those which aim to give the Muslim individual and the Muslim community spiritual purification, consolidating their relations with their Lord. Other legislation included in

the Chapter aims to regulate relations within the Muslim community, as well as inter-community relations. Furthermore, the Chapter includes legislation permitting or prohibiting certain types of food, drink, marriages and other practices. All these form a complete unit, in a single Chapter, confirming the true meaning of religion, as God intended it and as understood by Muslims who are true to their faith.

This Chapter opens with a clear order to fulfil these contracts before it proceeds to explain what is lawful and what is unlawful of slaughtered animals, types of food and drink, and also of family relations. It also explains a large number of legal provisions and rules of worship, as well as the true nature of faith, submission to God and the nature of Godhead. The Chapter also clarifies the type of relations which exist between the nation of the Quranic message and other nations and beliefs. It explains the obligations of the community of believers in remaining true to their faith, bearing witness in all fairness, maintaining a position of leadership among humanity by virtue of their revealed Book. Theirs is the Book that supersedes all earlier revelations, establishing the rule of God as He has revealed it. They must always be on their guard lest they overlook some of what God may have revealed. They must also ensure that their personal feelings of love or hostility are not allowed to influence the way they administer full justice.

That the Chapter follows this pattern after giving a clear opening gives the term "contracts" a much wider sense than what immediately springs to mind. It is evident that "contracts" in this particular context means all the controls God has set up for human life, the most important of which is the contract of believing in God, acknowledging His overall Lordship and submitting to His will. This is the basic contract from which all the other contracts and controls in life are derived.

### IMPLEMENTING DIVINE DECREES

Once the address is made to all believers to honor their contracts, some of these are stated in detail: **(5:1-5:3)** Whatever is stated here, either prohibiting or making lawful certain slaughtered animals, or certain species, or restricting places and times, is part of the "contract" believers must fulfil. It is part of the contract of faith that those who are party to it, i.e. the believers, must receive their instructions regarding what is lawful and what is unlawful only from God. In this respect, they recognize no authority other than His. Therefore, they are addressed as believers at the outset of this detailed explanation of what they may and may not have.

*Flocks of animals were permitted to you, but what is now re-*

*counted to you:* **(5:1)** Only because of this permission by God, not through any other authority, is it lawful and permissible for you to eat the flesh of whatever is included under the term "flocks", whether slaughtered or hunted, with the exception of the prohibitions that follow. Such prohibitions can either be temporary, restricted to certain places, or are total and applicable at all times and places. The flocks include camels, cows and sheep. Added to these are undomesticated animals like zebra, deer, bull and buffalo.

Thereafter, all other exceptions are detailed. The first pertains to hunting when believers are in the state of consecration: *You are not ones who are permitted hunting while you are in pilgrim sanctity.* **(5:1)** The prohibition here applies to the whole process of hunting. When one enters into the state of consecration as one starts pilgrimage or *umra*, one turns to God with one's whole being, turning one's back to familiar life practices which are a source of entertainment and pleasure. One turns one's face, and one's whole being, to the Sacred House which God has endowed with a feeling of security that applies to all those in it. Therefore, it is necessary that when we are there, we do not stretch our hands to kill any living thing. Thus, one experiences during this time a necessary feeling of the bonds between all living things created by God, the giver of life. All creatures are, thus, safe from human aggression. The necessities of life, for which game and hunting have been allowed for food purposes, are thus reduced in order to impart to the human being a sense of elevation above what is familiar and lawful to him in ordinary days.

Before proceeding to add more details of what is excepted from the initial ruling of general permission, this contract is linked to the overall contract of faith. The believers are also reminded of the source of that covenant: *Truly, God gives judgment how He wants.* **(5:1)** His will is absolute and He gives His commandments as He wishes. No one may have a say in what He decrees and no one can abrogate or overrule His judgment. What He outlines in this Chapter is His verdict on what is lawful and what is forbidden to us.

The address is again made to the believers to emphasize that they are not allowed to violate what God has restricted: **(5:2)** The first thing that springs to mind regarding the meaning of: *Profane not the waymarks of God* is that it is a reference to the rites of pilgrimage and *umra* and the restrictions that apply to everyone who enters into the state of consecration when he starts his pilgrimage or *umra* and which remain in force until the main part of the pilgrimage is over and when animals intended for sacrifice are slaughtered. During the state of consecration, a pilgrim does not offend against these restrictions, because such an offense represents a desecration of the

sanctity imparted to them by God. The Chapter describes these rites as being set up by God in order to emphasize their sanctity and to warn against their desecration.

### OTHER RESTRICTIONS

The term "Sacred Month" as it occurs in this Quranic sign refers to the four months of sanctity in the lunar calendar which are: Rajab, Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hijja and al-Muharram. God has forbidden fighting in these four months, which used to be given special sanctity by Arabian tribes prior to the Quranic message. However, they manipulated them as they wished, delaying certain months according to a ruling given by certain monks or a decree issued by the chiefs of powerful tribes. When the Quranic message was revealed, their sanctity was endorsed by God's legislation.

The Quran also states that delaying the sacred months and manipulating them is an indication of compounded ingratitude. Thus, the correct order has been re-established according to God's decree. These months remain sacred unless aggression is waged during them against the Muslims, when they are permitted to repel such aggression, without giving the aggressor a chance to escape, making use of the sanctity of these months which they do not recognize.

The offerings mentioned in the Chapter refer to sacrificial animals which pilgrims slaughter during pilgrimage as part of its rites. This may be a camel, a cow or a sheep. To offend against these is to slaughter them for any reason other than the one for which they have been consecrated. Nor may they be slaughtered until the day of sacrifice during pilgrimage or after the end of *umra*. The major part of any sacrificial animal is distributed to the poor. .

The term *the garlanded* mentioned in the Chapter refers to flocks which are adorned with garlands to denote that they have been pledged for sacrifice. They are then left alone to graze as they wish until the day when the pledge falls due for their sacrifice. Included among these are animals intended for sacrifice during pilgrimage and which are given a special sign to indicate the purpose for which they have been pledged. Once such flocks are adorned with garlands, they are no longer available for ordinary slaughter. They are slaughtered only for the purpose for which they have been pledged.

Similarly, God has given special sanctity to those who go to the Sacred House, seeking a share of God's bounty and grace and aiming to please Him. They come to the House to do some legitimate business and to seek God's pleasure, whether at the time of pilgrimage or at other times. When they come to God's Sacred House, they are given security.

Having explained all these restrictions, this sign makes it clear that once the period of consecration is over, hunting becomes lawful again, provided that it takes place outside the Haram area:. *ones who are bound for the Sacred House looking for grace from their Lord and contentment. And when you left your pilgrim sanctity, then, hunt.* (5:2) This is an area of security which God establishes in His Sacred Mosque, as He has indeed established a time of security during the Sacred Months. People, animals, birds and trees in this area are immune from human aggression. This makes it an area of absolute peace, in response to the prayer of Abraham, the noble father of this nation. This period of peace is extended to the whole planet for four complete months every year, under the guardianship of the Quranic message. People who enjoy the sweetness of this real sense of security will be keen to maintain it according to its provisions and to fulfill their covenants with God. They will try to extend it so that it encompasses human life throughout the year and the whole world over.

### JUSTICE FOR FRIEND AND FOE

With the emphasis placed here on sanctity and security, God calls on those who believe in Him to fulfill their contracts with Him and to rise to the level which enables them to assume the leadership of humanity that has been assigned to them. To fulfil this role they must not allow themselves to be influenced by personal feelings, emotions or temporary circumstances. God calls on them not to transgress even against those who debarred them from entering the Sacred Mosque when they sought to visit it in the year known as "the year of al-Hudaybiyyah" and earlier. The actions of those people left deep scars in the Muslims' hearts, which were bound to arouse emotions of hatred. But all this notwithstanding, the actions of the Muslim community must not be guided by such feelings. Its duty fits its great role: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* (5:2)

How the Quranic message works on people is best illustrated by the spectacular results it achieved in molding the Arabs such that this noble behavior became characteristic of them and, hence, they abided by its requirements. Prior to the Quranic message they were far removed from such lofty standards. Their unchallenged motto was: Support your brother, whether he is the victim or the perpetrator of injustice. Tribal loyalty was of paramount importance. To cooperate

in furthering evil and aggression was more natural to them than co-operation in furthering piety and righteousness. They forged alliances, but their purpose was more to support evil than to support right. Rare were the pacts made in pre- Quranic days which supported what was and is right. This was only natural in an environment where traditions, customs and morals were not derived from God's constitution. Perhaps the best expression of this principle was the motto we have just quoted. A poet of those days has also put it in a nutshell when he says: I am only a the human being of the tribe of Qurazayah: I go with my tribe, whether it follows the right way or the wrong one.

Then the Quranic message was revealed to establish new values and to remold people's way of thinking. the Quranic message tells the believers: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* **(5:2)** Thus, a new bond linking hearts to God was established. Values and morals were given a new divine standard. The Arabs, and humanity as a whole, were led out of blind fanaticism and the control of personal and tribal feelings in determining who is a friend and who is a foe. The human being was reborn in the Arabian Peninsula. The new the human being derives his moral standards from God. This heralded the rebirth of the human being throughout the world. Prior to this, there was nothing in Arabia but blind loyalties which say: Support your brother, whether he is the victim or the perpetrator of injustice. The same blind loyalties were known throughout the world.

It is a great divide that separates a community governed by such blind loyalty and fanaticism and a community governed by a constitution stating: *And let not that you detest a folk who barred you from the Masjid al-Haram drive you into exceeding the limits. And cooperate with one another in virtuous conduct and God-consciousness and cooperate not with one another in sin and deep seated dislike. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Severe in repayment.* **(5:2)** That great divide was removed by the only force that could remove it, namely, the Quranic message.

### PROHIBITED MEAT

The Chapter now begins to give the details of the exceptions made in the first sign of animal that are lawful to eat: **(5:3)**

The first three types: carrion, blood and the flesh of swine are mentioned as forbidden in sign (2:173). We commented on this pro-

hibition in our discussion of this sign. Whether human knowledge will eventually be able to determine the reasons for this prohibition or not, divine knowledge has made it clear that these types of food are unwholesome. This is all that we need to know, because God only forbids what is evil and what harms human life in one way or another, whether such harm is known to the human being or not. Human knowledge remains limited. It does not know everything that causes harm and all that is useful.

Animals on which a name other than that of God has been invoked are forbidden to eat because such a practice is essentially contrary to faith, which is based on the fact that Godhead belongs to God alone. The first thing that follows from this acknowledgement is that the purpose behind every intention and action must be the pursuit of God's pleasure and that every step is made in His name, which is invoked before every action. Therefore, when the name of anyone other than God is invoked at the slaughtering of an animal, and indeed when no name is mentioned at such slaughter, the flesh of that animal is forbidden to eat because such an action is basically contrary to faith. It is in this moral respect that it is unwholesome and, therefore, added to what is physically unwholesome such as carrion, blood and pork.

Animals strangled in one way or another, or beaten or gored to death, or killed by a fall, or savaged by a beast of prey, are all types of carrion. Unless these are caught when still alive and slaughtered in the proper Quranic manner, they are forbidden meat. These details are given here in order to remove any suspicion that these may have a separate ruling. Scholars have spoken in detail on these and given different rulings with regard to "slaughter", and when an animal is deemed to have been slaughtered. Some scholars consider that if an animal has suffered an injury inevitably leading to its death, it cannot be made lawful even when it is slaughtered before it dies. Other scholars consider that such a slaughter, when the animal is still alive, is appropriate, regardless of the type of injury. These details may be referred to in books of jurisprudence, or *fiqh*.

Before the Quranic message, there were idols in the Kabah where the ungrateful used to slaughter their animals. They also used to throw some of the blood of their slaughtered animals on these idols. Animals slaughtered on such idolatrous altars, wherever they may be, are forbidden because of the place of their slaughter, even though the name of God may have been mentioned at the time of slaughter. The action itself is idolatrous.

Of the types of meat that are made forbidden in this sign there remains the one concerned with the divining of arrows. These arrows

were used in pre-Quranic Arabia in order to decide whether to undertake a certain action or not. Different reports suggest that either three or seven arrows were used, with each indicating a different action. The same arrows were also used in gambling, and to divide the meat of the camel offered for gambling. Every one of the gamblers had an arrow. The arrows were mixed and one is drawn. The person whose name was given to that arrow would take the amount of meat apportioned to it. God has forbidden resorting to arrows for dividing anything and using these arrows for any division because it is just a type of gambling, and all gambling is strictly forbidden. He has also prohibited eating the meat divided in this manner.

*Whoever was driven by necessity due to emptiness—not one who inclines to sin—then, truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(5:3)** A person who is so hungry that he fears for his life may eat of any of these forbidden types, as long as he does not intend to do what is forbidden and commit a sin. Scholars have given different rulings on how much one is allowed to eat: is it only what is sufficient for someone to stay alive, or is one allowed to eat one's fill? Alternatively, can people in this predicament save something for other meals if they fear that they may not find food that is permissible? We need not go into these details here. It is sufficient for our purpose to understand that this religion of ours always allows for what is easy, and always gives situations of necessity the sort of rulings ensuring that no affliction is caused to its followers. In the end, matters are left to clear intention and to being conscious of what God requires of us. A person who is driven by an extreme situation to eat of these forbidden types, having no intention to commit a sin, will suffer no punishment. Instead, they will find that God is certainly Forgiving, Merciful.

### PERFECTION AT ITS BEST

So far we have discussed the details of forbidden food as detailed in this sign. The sign, however, also includes other statements that require proper discussion. *Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope because of your way of life. So dread them not but dread Me. Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)**

This statement, which comes in the middle of a detailed account of which meat is forbidden to eat, was the last statement of the Quran to be revealed. It declares the completion of the message of the Quranic message and that its blessings have been brought to their full.

*Today, those who were ungrateful gave up hope because of your*

*way of life.* **(5:3)** They have reached a point of despair and realized that they cannot distort or detract from this religion or invalidate it when God has made it perfect and guaranteed to preserve it. They may defeat the Muslims in battle or ain mastery over them for a period of time, but they can never vanquish this religion. It is the only religion that has been preserved against all factors of corruption and distortion. Its enemies have tried very hard to distort and to scheme against it, and its people were at times totally ignorant of its truth. But God never allows the earth to be without a group of true believers who recognize the truth of this faith and who dedicate themselves to its advocacy. The Quranic message remains with them fully understood and preserved until they hand it over to the next generation of true believers. God's promise that the ungratefuls' despair of vanquishing this religion will always come true.

The believers are then addressed: *So dread them not but dread Me.* **(5:3)** The ungrateful can never detract from the essence of this message. Nor can they gain the upper hand against its advocates, unless these deviate from it and no longer give, through their action and behavior, a practical translation of its method of living. In other words, they abandon the duties it assigns to them and neglect to fulfil its provisions in their way of life.

*Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)** The day on which God revealed this verse during the Messenger's pilgrimage of farewell was the day when this religion attained its perfection and no room was left for any further improvement. The greatest divine blessings were bestowed on the believers in full measure by giving them this all-embracing and comprehensive code. The Quranic message was chosen for them by God. Therefore, anyone who finds it unacceptable as a way of life actually rejects what God has determined to be the proper faith.

### GRACE ABOUNDING

When all this has been established, God tells the believers: *Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)** Thus, the faith and the law have been brought to perfection, since the combination of both constitutes religion. No believer may then imagine that religion, in this sense, requires any addition or complement to improve on it, or needs some modification or adaptation to suit local conditions. No one who entertains such thoughts is a true believer; for a believer accepts what

God says and is satisfied with His choice. The law of the particular time in which the Quran was revealed applies to all time because, according to God's own statement, it is the message revealed to humanity to be implemented by all communities for the rest of time. The detailed regulations and laws will remain the same, while the basic principles constitute the framework within which human life develops and progresses. When the framework is broken, the human being abandons faith altogether.

It is from depths of iniquity that the Quranic message rescued the Arabs, molding them into a nation, one capable of assuming the leadership of all humanity. It was the same generation of Arabs which lived in the depths of ignorance and darkness, before it experienced life at the top as envisaged by the Quranic message. Therefore, they were quick to fully appreciate the significance of the Quranic statement: *Today, I perfected your way of life for you and I fulfilled My divine blessing on you and I was well-pleased with submission to the One God for your way of life.* **(5:3)**

### NOTHING WHOLESOME IS FORBIDDEN

They ask you what is lawful to them. **(5:4-5:5)** This question from the believers about what is lawful describes the frame of mind the chosen community adopted by virtue of the honor of being addressed by God Himself. It gives us an impression of the sort of reluctance they had in approaching anything that was practiced in pre-Quranic days lest it be unacceptable to the Quranic message. They felt that they needed to ask about everything to make sure that it fitted with their new way of life.

It is in this context that we should read their question to the Messenger about lawful food, after they had heard the signs which outlined what was forbidden to them: *They ask you what was permitted to them. Say: That which is good was permitted to you.* This imparts to them the true feeling that they have not been forbidden anything good or wholesome. Indeed, all the good things of life have been made lawful to them. Only bad or evil things are forbidden. Needless to say, everything that God forbids humanity is either something physically repugnant to uncorrupted human nature, such as carrion, blood and the flesh of swine, or something a believer's heart finds nauseating, such as the flesh of animals on which the name of someone other than God has been invoked, or what has been slaughtered over idolatrous altars, or something that has been divided with the help of arrows, which is a type of gambling.

To the good things mentioned here in general, a special type is also added to emphasize that which is good. These are animals

caught by beasts and birds of prey which have been trained for that very purpose, such as a hawk or a falcon, and hunting dogs and lions which have been trained to overpower game animals: *And what you taught of hunting creatures, as one who teaches hunting dogs of what God taught you. So eat of what they seized for you and remember the Name of God over it and be conscious of God. Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* **(5:4)**

The condition which makes what is caught by such trained hunting animals lawful to eat is that they should leave their prey for their master. That is, the hunting beast or bird must not eat of the animal it has killed, except when the master has gone away. If they eat of their prey at the time of the catch, they have not been properly trained. They are simply killing other animals for themselves not for their masters. As such, the master may not eat of the game they kill, even if most of it is left, and even if they bring the prey back alive to him. Once they have eaten of it, it cannot be made lawful, not even by proper methods of slaughter.

The believers are finally reminded to continue to fear God and that His reckoning is very swift. Therefore, they should always be on their guard. The question of permissibility or prohibition is thus closely related to the more important feeling of being conscious of God and of fearing Him. It is the pivot round which every intention and every action in the life of a believer turns. Thus, it transforms human life into a relationship with God, a recognition of His greatness and a consciousness of His presence and power in all situations, whether we are alone or with others: *Truly, God is Swift in reckoning.* **(5:4)**

### GOOD RELATIONS WITH OTHER RELIGIONS

The Chapter goes on to outline more types of food made permissible for believers, and adds to that what is permissible in marriage. **(5:5)** Again the variety of permissible pleasures are initially described as good: *Today, what is good was permitted to you.* **(5:5)** This emphasizes the meaning we have already stressed, explaining that only evil things have been forbidden to Muslims. Within the framework of making good things lawful, we witness a genuine manifestation of the Quranic tolerance when it comes to dealing with non-Muslim communities living side by side with Muslims in the land of the Quranic message, or perhaps having a relationship based on a peace treaty or one of simple loyalty.

This is clear evidence that the Quranic message provides the only system which allows for the establishment of a world community where Muslims do not live in isolation from the followers of other revealed religions and where barriers are not erected between the followers of different religions which exist side by side in Muslim

lands. This also applies to social relations. As for loyalty and patronage, these are covered by different rules which will be outlined later in this Chapter.

The same conditions apply to lawful marriages with either virtuous Muslim women or virtuous women of the followers of other divine religions: *And the ones who are free, chaste females from the females, ones who believe and the ones who are free, chaste females from among those who were given the Book before you when you were to give them their bridal due, as males, ones who seek wedlock, not as ones who are licentious males, nor as males, ones who take lovers to themselves.* **(5:5)** This means that a dower must be paid for a serious, lawful marriage by which a the human being provides his wife with a home, security and protection. The money paid must never be used for an illegitimate relationship that makes a woman available to any the human being as a prostitute or only to one the human being as a mistress. Both types were known in pre-the Quranic Arabia and recognized by Arabian society prior to its purification by the Quranic message.

These rulings are followed by a comment which carries an added emphasis together with a strong warning against their violation: *And whoever disbelieves after belief, then, surely, his actions will be fruitless. And he in the world to come will be among the ones who are losers.* **(5:5)** All these regulations are related to faith. To implement them as they are is faith, or at least is evidence of faith. A person who abandons them rejects the faith altogether. Therefore, all his actions will be to no avail. Indeed, whatever good he may do will be rejected by God. This state of affairs, i.e. the rejection of the actions of one who denies the faith, is described in the Quran in terms of what may happen to an animal which grazes in a poisonous area. Its belly is greatly swollen and it dies. This is a perfect description of what is rejected of man's actions. It swells, but it comes to nothing. In the life to come, such a person suffers a loss that comes on top of his vain actions.

It is to be noted that this stern warning comes by way of comment on rulings outlining what is permissible and what is forbidden in matters of food and marriage. This is indicative of the fact that all details of this religion of the Quranic message are closely interwoven in one whole. Nothing that is in conflict with its principles and regulations, whether relevant to fundamentals or matters of detail, is at all acceptable.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QUESTIONS

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?
Are any Quranic concepts (words or phrases) unclear?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Discover the structure of their own thought.
Develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view

## LESSON 112(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS

Any questions you ask require information. There are three aspects to this:

1. What are the questions I am being asked either explicitly or implicitly?
2. Does my thinking have a purpose?
3. How am I using the information?

If you have information, information never uses itself. Information never gives itself meaning. It deduces implications from itself. Information must be treated by the mind. It must be interpreted. Information must be given a meaning. As Quranic critical thinkers you must make certain to distinguish hard data from the inferences or conclusions that are drawn from them.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

### SIGNS 5:6-5:11

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*When you stood up for the formal prayer,*
*then, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows*
*and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles.*
*If you had been defiled, then, cleanse yourselves.*
*And if you had been sick or on a journey*
*or one of you drew near from the privy*
*or you came into sexual contact with your wives*
*and you find no water,*
*then, aim at getting wholesome, dry earth*
*and wipe your faces and hands with it.*
*God wants not to make any impediment for you*
*and He wants to purify you and to fulfill*
*His divine blessing on you,*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (5:6)
*And remember the divine blessing of God on you*
*and His solemn promise that he made as a covenant with you*
*by it when you said: We heard and we obeyed.*
*And be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (5:7)
*O those who believed! Be staunch in equity*
*as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk*
*drive you into not dealing justly.*
*Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.*

*And be conscious of God.*
*Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)
*And God promised those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*that for them is forgiveness and a sublime compensation.* (5:9)
*And those who were ungrateful and denied Our signs,*
*those will be the Companions of Hellfire!* (5:10)
*O those who believed! Remember the divine blessing of God*
*on you when they, a folk, were about to extend their hands*
*against you, but He limited their hands from you.*
*And be God-conscious.*
*And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* (5:11)

## COMMENTARY°

### GETTING READY FOR PRAYER

This discourse about good food and good, virtuous women is followed by a reference to prayer and regulations governing purification in preparation for prayer. **(5:6)**

### TOO VALUABLE AN OBLIGATION

*O those who believed! When you stood up for the formal prayer.* **(5:6)** Formal prayer is a meeting with God. Anyone who is about to offer a formal prayer stands up in front of God Himself, makes his supplication to Him, and addresses Him in a highly intimate manner. Therefore, it is important to prepare for it properly. In this respect, it is necessary to undergo a physical purification to help with the spiritual preparation. Perhaps this is the reason, as we understand it—though God alone knows the truth—for the requirement of ablution, the essential parts of which are detailed in this Quranic sign: *then, wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows and wipe your heads and your feet up to the ankles.* **(5:6)** These requirements are the subject of very minor differences among scholars, perhaps the most important of which is whether they should be done in the order they are mentioned in this sign or done without following any particular order. This type of ablution is required for a minor invalidation of purity, such as going to the toilet or releasing wind. A shower or a bath in which one washes all one's body is required to remove a state of ceremonial impurity which happens as a result of ejaculation whether through a wet dream or when awake, sexual intercourse and also women's menstruation.

Having outlined the requirements of ablution in both ordinary and total situations, the Quranic sign speaks of dry ablution which may replace either type. This is a concession of which Muslims may

avail themselves in the following situations: when water is not available; when a person is ill and needs to have an ordinary ablution, i.e. *wudu*, or when he is required to have a grand ablution, i.e. *ghusl*, but where water may be harmful to him; and when a person is traveling and needs to perform either type of ablution.

This Quranic sign states clearly the divine purpose behind the requirements of ablution, ordinary and total: *God wants not to make any impediment for you and He wants to purify you and to fulfill His divine blessing on you, so that perhaps you will give thanks.* **(5:6)** When we reflect on this statement, we are bound to see the thread of unity and complementarity the Quranic message establishes between worship and other legislation. Washing some parts of our bodies as we do in ablution, *wudu*, or having a full bath, *ghusl*, as we do in total ablution, are not merely meant for physical cleanliness. The spiritual side is certainly stronger because when it is not possible or inadvisable to use water, dry ablution, which fulfils only this stronger aspect, is deemed sufficient. Moreover, this religion of the Quranic message is a complete way of life which addresses all situations in all societies and stages with a unified and consistent system. In this way, its purpose is realized in all situations in one way or another. Let us then make sure that we fully understand the purpose of the Quranic message before passing a judgement that may not be based on sound knowledge or divine guidance. We must also maintain an attitude of propriety when we speak about God and His legislation.

### JUSTICE EVEN WHEN DEALING WITH ENEMIES

Remember always the blessings God has bestowed on you and the covenant with which He has bound you when you said: **(5:7-5:8)**

The first generation to be addressed by the Quran were fully aware of the extent of God's blessings bestowed on them by His revealing this religion. They felt the change within themselves, in their lives, community, and in the position they occupied among humanity. A simple reference to this blessing was always sufficient to turn their attentions to a great, undeniable fact of life. Similarly, a reference to the covenant with which God bound them to listen and to obey aroused in them feelings of dignity, since they were the other party in a contract made with God, the Almighty. To a believer who contemplates such a relationship, this is something great indeed. Therefore, it is sufficient to remind them of their duty to remain God-fearing. They were ever conscious of God: *And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* **(5:7)**

### A GULF TOO WIDE

Part of the covenant with which God has bound the Muslim community requires it to deal with other people on the basis of absolute justice, which is never affected by feelings of love or hatred, or by feelings, interests, or relations of any kind. It is justice based on the duty of remaining steadfast in devotion to God alone. No influences are ever allowed to tilt the balance of justice, especially when believers are mindful that God watches over them and knows what lies at the bottom of their hearts. They fully understand this address: **(5:8)**

This divine system, which brings out the best in the human being, realizes that this is a very difficult objective. Therefore, it gives a helping introduction: *And be conscious of God.* **(5:8)** The instructions are also concluded with a comment that helps in achieving the objective: **"***And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* **(5:8)**

### A PROMISE THAT NEVER FAILS

Moreover, there must be a reward given by God to the believers, who deal with Him alone. This reward is needed to give encouragement to people to fulfil their obligations and to discharge their trust. The end of those who disbelieve and deny God's revelations must be different from that of those who believe and do well: **(5:9-5:10)**

The Chapter continues to cultivate this spirit of justice and tolerance among the Muslim community, and to weaken feelings of hostility, prejudice and revenge. It reminds Muslims of God's grace which manifested itself in restraining the hands of the ungratefuls when they intended to make a determined assault against the Muslims: *O those who believed! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when they, a folk, were about to extend their hands against you, but He limited their hands from you. And be conscious of God. And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(5:11)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

How would your rate yourself? Answer the following questions::

How can we know whether or not this is true?
What would it be like for this claim to be true? False?
Do we clearly understand the difference?
What evidence would count for it? Against it?

# LESSON 112(3). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS

**HOW IS DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING BY CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS USED IN THE QURAN? CRITERIA INCLUDE**

**Clear evidence:** *Surely, clear evidence drew near you from your Lord. So whoever perceived, it will be for his own soul. Whoever was in darkness will be against his own soul. Say: And I am not a guardian over you.* **(6:104)**

**Meditation, pondering, considering:** *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* **(38:29)**

**Recollection:** *And his folk argued with him. He said: You argue with me about God while, surely, He guided me? I fear not whatever partners you ascribe with Him. When my Lord wills a thing, my Lord encompassed everything in His knowledge. Will you not, then, recollect?* **(6:80)**

**Reflection:** *And among His signs are that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you rest in them. And He made affection and mercy among you. Truly, in that are certainly signs for a folk who reflect.* **(30:21)**

**Taking to heart:** *And whomever God wants, He guides him. He expands his breast for The Submission to One God. And whomever He wants to cause to go astray, He makes his breast tight, troubling, as if he had been climbing up a difficult ascent. Thus, God assigns disgrace on those who believe not. And this is the path of your Lord, one that is straight. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who recollect.* **(6:125-6:126)**

**Convincing proof from reliable and certain premises:** *Say: Prepare your proof. This is a Remembrance for him who is with me and a Remembrance of him before me. Nay! Most of them know not The Truth, so they are ones who turn aside.* **(21:24)**

**Bringing your proof, showing your evidence:** *Is not He better Who begins creation, again, will cause it to return and Who provides you from the heaven and the earth. Is there a god besides God? Say: Prepare your proof if you had been ones who are sincere!* **(27:64)**

**People of intellect and reflection:** *It is He Who caused water to descend from heaven for you to drink from it and from it, trees wherein you pasture your herds. He caused crops to develop for you with it, and the olives and the date palms and the grapevines, and all kinds of fruits. Truly, in that is a sign for a folk who reflect.* **(16:10-16:11)**

**Explaining distinctly:** *And it is He Who made the stars for you so that you will be truly guided by them in the shadows of dry land and the sea. Surely, We explained distinctly the signs for a folk who know.* **(6:97-6:98)**

**Being reasonable:** *And He caused to be subservient to you the nighttime and the daytime and the sun and the moon, and the stars, ones caused to be subservient by His command. Truly, in that are signs for a folk who are reasonable.* **(16:12)**

**Being just and fair:** *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness. And be conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

Critical thinkers understand the difference between indicating a preference for something and evaluating something. They are aware of the process and the necessary criteria in order to provide a thoughtful and fair-minded evaluation. They make use of explicit criteria.

They base their judgments on values that they have clarified and understood. When discussing the criteria of the Quranic message, critical Quranic thinkers first both understand the issue in question and the purpose of the evaluation and what function the issue being evaluated is to serve. They do this by taking into consideration various points of view in their evaluation.

The Quranic message understands the important relationship of evidence to belief and so often may qualify its statements accordingly. The tentativeness of many of its signs is characterized by the appropriate use of such qualifiers as: highly likely, probably, not very likely, highly unlikely, often, usually, seldom, I doubt, I suspect, most, many, and some. Critical thinkers are not only clear, but also exact or precise.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

## SIGNS 5:12-5:19

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, God took a solemn promise*
*from the Children of Jacob*
*and We raised up among them twelve chieftains.*
*And God said: Truly, I am with you.*
*If you performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms*
*and believed in My Messengers*
*and you supported them and you lent God a fairer loan,*
*I would, certainly, absolve you of your evil deeds.*
*And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens*
*beneath which rivers run.*
*Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this,*
*then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* (5:12)
*Then, for their breaking their solemn promise,*
*We cursed them and We made their hearts ones that harden.*

*They tamper with the words out of context*
*and they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of in it.*
*You will not cease to peruse the treachery of them,*
*but a few of them. Then, overlook and pardon them.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (5:13)
*And from those who said: We are Christians,*
*We took their solemn promise,*
*but they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of it*
*so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them*
*until the Day of Resurrection.*
*And God will tell them of what they had been crafting.* (5:14)
*O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you.*
*He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing*
*of the Book and pardons much.*
*Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.* (5:15)
*God guides with it whoever followed His contentment*
*to ways of peace*
*and He brings them out from the shadows into the light*
*with His permission and He guides them to a straight path.* (5:16)
*Certainly, ungrateful were those who said:*
*Truly, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.*
*Say: Who, then, has any sway over God?*
*If He wanted to He would cause the Messiah son of Mary*
*and his mother to perish*
*and whatever is in and on the earth altogether.*
*To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth*
*and what is between the two.*
*He creates what He wills.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (5:17)
*And the Jews and Christians said:*
*We are the children of God and His beloved.*
*Say: Why, then, does He punish you for your impieties?*
*Nay! You are mortals whom He created.*
*He forgives whom He wills and He punishes whom He wills.*
*And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth*
*and what is even between the two.*
*And to Him is the Homecoming!* (5:18)
*O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you.*
*He makes manifest to you the way of life—*
*after an interval without Messengers—*
*so that you say not:*
*There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings*
*or a warner.*

*Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (5:19)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE TERMS OF COVENANTS MADE WITH GOD

Indeed, God made a covenant with the Children of Jacob and We appointed among them twelve captains. God said: I shall be with you. If you attend to your prayers, practise regular charity, believe in My messengers and support them and offer up to God a generous loan, I shall forgive you your sins and admit you into gardens through which running waters flow. But any of you who, after this, rejects the faith will indeed have strayed from the right path. Then for having broken their covenant, We rejected them and caused their hearts to harden. They now distort the meaning of [revealed] words, taking them out of their context. Moreover, they have forgotten much of what they have been told to bear in mind. From all but a few of them you will always experience treachery. But pardon them, and forbear. God loves those who do good. Likewise, from those who said: **(5:12-5:14)**

The covenant God had accepted from the Children of Jacob stated a specific condition and stipulated certain penalties in case of default. After explaining the circumstances leading to the confirmation of this covenant, the Chapter mentions its terms, conditions and penalties. It was a covenant made with the twelve captains of the Children of Jacob, representing all twelve tribes descending from Jacob (Jacob). Each tribe descended from one of Jacob's sons. The terms of the covenant are outlined as follows: *Truly, I am with you. If you performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms and believed in My Messengers and you supported them and you lent God a fairer loan, I would, certainly, absolve you of your evil deeds. And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run. Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this, then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* **(5:12)**

When God says to any group of people: *Truly, I am with you.*, He gives them a great promise. He who has God on his side suffers no opposition. Whoever and whatever stands against him is of no consequence. Moreover, whoever is with God will not go astray. To be with God is sufficient to ensure the right guidance and the proper support. Anyone who is sure to be on God's side will never suffer worry or misery. He is reassured and blessed with unfailing happiness. He need not ask for anything better than what he already has.

But God does not give this blessing of being with them as a spe-

cial favor or a personal gift. This comes only after its conditions are fulfilled. It is, indeed, a contract that outlines conditions and specifies penalties. The first condition is to attend to prayer. This is more than merely offering prayers. It means that prayers should become a manifestation of a true relationship between the human being and his Lord. This makes prayer an educative element which purifies man's behavior and dissuades him from committing any blatant sin or gross indecency.

Second is charitable payment, in recognition of God's favor for having given us what we have and by way of acknowledgement of the fact that whatever we may own actually belongs to God. The payment of *zakat*, or charity, is a manifestation of our obedience to God with regard to how to dispense with the money He has given us and specified the conditions of our ownership of it. Moreover, a perfect system of social security can thus be implemented in a society established on faith. Thus, the social economy becomes free of the shackles which result from the concentration of national wealth in the hands of a small minority. This leads to a situation where the overwhelming majority of the population is unable to buy its needs while a small minority enjoys all the wealth. This leads to all sorts of social corruption which can he prevented by the *zakat* system which ensures the proper distribution of wealth.

The next condition is to believe in God's Messengers making no distinction between them. Every single one of them was sent by God to preach the same message. Therefore, to deny any single one of them is to deny them all and to disbelieve in God, who had sent them all. Moreover, believing in them must not be a mere mental exercise. To truly believe in them is to be actively involved in supporting them in order to ensure that they succeed in their mission. Believing in the divine faith requires that a believer is always ready to do what is necessary and within his power to support his faith and to see it well established in human life. The divine faith is not confined merely to a set of beliefs or acts of worship. It is a practical system which organizes human life in a certain fashion. Therefore, it requires the support of all its followers to establish and protect it. Otherwise, a believer does not fulfil his covenant with God.

In addition to the purifying alms (*zakat*), giving generously to support God's cause is mentioned as a loan given to God. It should be pointed out here that it is God who owns what we have, but He gracefully describes what we pay to further His cause as a loan given to Him.

These were the conditions of the covenant God accepted from the Children of Jacob. The reward for the fulfilment of these condi-

tions was to forgive them their sins. Human beings will always err, no matter how keen they are to do what is right. Therefore, the forgiveness of sins is a great reward and a manifestation of God's endless grace. The reward also includes admission into Heaven which is described in the Quran as: *And I would, certainly, cause you to enter Gardens beneath which rivers run.* **(5:12)** This is again a reward which God bestows on human beings out of His grace. No the human being can earn this reward through his own actions. God, however, has promised this reward to those who do their utmost to fulfil their pledges to Him.

The penalty for failing to honor one's pledges is specified at the end of this sign: *Then, whoever among you was ungrateful after this, then, surely, he went astray from the right way.* **(5:12)** Therefore, he can have no guidance and no way of return. The pledge had already been made, the guidance already provided, the way shown and the penalty specified. Nothing can be of any benefit any more.

Such was the covenant God accepted from the captains of the Children of Jacob on behalf of their communities. They all accepted it, which made it a covenant applicable to every single individual among them, and one with the whole nation they constituted. How, then, did the Jacobites subsequently fare?

### HARDENED HEARTS

They have indeed broken their covenant with God; they killed their prophets for no legitimate reason, and they plotted to kill and crucify Jesus the last of their Messengers. They also distorted their revealed Scriptures, i.e. the Torah, and abandoned its laws. They adopted a hostile attitude towards the last of all Messengers, Muhammad . They schemed against him and betrayed him and adopted an uncompromising attitude of hostility towards his message, not hesitating to violate the treaty they signed with him. As a result, God denied them His guidance and rejected them. Their hearts were caused to harden so that they could no longer be the recipients of divine guidance: **(5:13)**

*You will not cease to peruse the treachery of them, but a few of them.* **(5:13)** This is an address to the Messenger, describing the attitude of the opponents in Madinah towards the Muslim community in Madinah.

At the time when this Quranic sign was revealed, God instructed His Messenger in these terms: *Then, overlook and pardon them. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* **(5:13)** To pardon their evil act is to do good, and to forgive their treachery is to do good. But a time came when forgiveness and pardon could no longer

be extended. God subsequently instructed the Messenger to evacuate them from Madinah and later from the Arabian Peninsula altogether. These instructions were carried out.

### THE ORIGINS OF ENMITY AMONG THE CHRISTIANS

God also relates to His Messenger and to the Muslim community that He accepted a covenant from those who described themselves as Christians, but they, too, were unfaithful to their covenant and suffered the consequences: *And from those who said: We are Christians, We took their solemn promise, but they forgot an allotment of what they were reminded of it so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them until the Day of Resurrection. And God will tell them of what they had been crafting.* **(5:14)**

This sign begins with a particularly significant description: *And from those who said: We are Christians, We took their solemn promise.* This mode of expression tells us that they simply professed to be Christians without giving practical credence to their claims. The essence of their covenant was to believe in God's Oneness. **(5:15-5:16)**

### A MESSENGER WITH AN UNLIKELY BACKGROUND

In this divine address to the people of earlier Scriptures, it is made clear that they are called upon to accept the Quranic message, believe in Muhammad and support him, as this has been part of their covenant which God accepted from them. They are clearly told that God Himself is a witness that this Messenger who could not read and write was His Messenger to them as well as to the Arabs and to all humanity. There is no denying the fact that his message was given to him by God, and no claim can be admitted that his message was addressed to the Arabs only; it is, indeed, addressed also to the people of earlier revelations: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing of the Book and pardons much. Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.* **(5:15)** He has sent a Messenger to you, and his role is to open things up to you so that you see them in their reality. You can thus see how he brings out into the open what you have conspired to suppress of the basic truth of the revelations given to you.

### THE NATURE OF GOD'S FINAL MESSAGE

The nature of what the last Messenger has been given, the role it is destined to play in human life and its practical effect are then explained: *Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.*

**(5:15)** Perhaps nothing expresses the nature of the Quran and the divine message of the Quranic message more accurately and comprehensively than stating that it is *a light*. In his heart of hearts, in everything in his life, in his evaluation of things, events and people, a believer realizes as soon as he accepts the truth of faith that he has a light that makes everything clear to him. Everything brightens up in front of him. No longer is he confused about anything; no longer does he suffer any hesitation before taking a serious decision; no longer is he travelling an unmarked road and no longer is he uncertain of his direction. His ultimate goal is clear. His way towards it is straight and he is certain of his footsteps. Two qualities describe the message which was given to the noble Messenger: *a light and a clear Book.*

We can save humanity from the tribulations of ignorance and the war it wages on the human being in all its shapes and forms. But we cannot do so until we save ourselves by turning back to what God has chosen for us and seek His pleasure by following it in order to be included among those whom God guides along the paths of peace and *He brings them out from the shadows into the light* **(5:16)**, by His grace. Everything that results from abandoning the Quranic message adds to the state of darkness. There is the darkness of superstition and ill-conceived beliefs, the darkness of unrestrained desire and caprice, the darkness of worry and confusion, the darkness of confused values and mistaken judgements and standards. Light on the other hand, is the sort of clarity and brightness which lightens up man's conscience, his mind and his whole life.

*He guides them to a straight path.* **(5:16)** It is in line with human nature and with the universe as well as the laws which govern the existence of both the human being and the universe. It leads straight to God and allows no confusion of issues or blurring of facts or errors of direction.

### FALSE CLAIMS LEADING TO DISBELIEF

Unbelievers indeed are they who say: **(5:17)** The message Jesus conveyed as given to him by his Lord was the message of God's absolute Oneness which has been given to every messenger. Total submission to God alone as the only God and the Lord of the universe was the attitude adopted by every messenger. This clear faith, however, later became distorted after pagans adopted Christianity, retaining some traces of their old pagan beliefs which they were keen to introduce into the faith based on God's oneness. As time passed, these deviant beliefs became an integral part of the whole faith.

### THE TRUE VERDICT

The final message gives the ultimate ruling on this whole issue, with the final Messenger declaring to the people who received revelations in former times the true nature of the divine faith: *Certainly, ungrateful were those who said: Truly, God is the Messiah, the son of Mary.* **(5:17)** An effort is made here to persuade them to listen to the voice of reason, upright nature and fact: *Say: Who, then, has any sway over God? If He wanted to He would cause the Messiah son of Mary and his mother to perish and whatever is in and on the earth altogether.* **(5:17)** This represents an absolute and undeniable distinction between God, His nature, will and dominion on the one hand and the nature of Jesus; his mother and all beings on the other.

The difference is clear and total. God is single; nothing is like Him; His will is absolute; His authority is total; no one can do anything to reverse His will should He desire to destroy the Christ, son of Mary, his mother and everyone on earth. He, the most glorious owns and creates everything, while all else are created: *To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is between the two.* **(5:17)**

### WISHFUL THINKING THAT COMES TO NOTHING

The Chapter then mentions another claim pressed by the Jews and Christians: *And the Jews and Christians said: We are the children of God and His beloved.* **(5:18)** They allege that some sort of parenthood belongs to God. If this fatherhood is not a physical one, then it is spiritual. Whatever it is, it throws an element of doubt on the concept of God's oneness and detracts from the decisive separation between the position of God and that of His servants. The fact is that this separation is necessary for the clarity of faith and the proper order of human life. It is essential so that all worship is addressed to God by all His creation. They, thus, have a single legislative authority which sets for them their values, standards, laws and systems, with no confusion of authority resulting from a jumble of qualities and positions. It is not merely a question of deviant beliefs, but a question of their consequences that are bound to corrupt life as a whole.

At this point, the Quranic message rejects most decisively such deviant beliefs and their practical consequences which corrupt life. It stresses the fact that God's justice is absolute: *Say: Why, then, does He punish you for your impieties? Nay! You are mortals whom He created. He forgives whom He wills and He punishes whom He wills.* **(5:18)** Their claims of being God's children are, thus, stated to be false. They are no more than other human beings. Forgiveness or punishment is determined by the same rule, based on God's will

which has established certain reasons for forgiveness and different ones for punishment. Neither is determined by any special relationship with God.

We then have a reiteration of the fact that everything belongs to God and returns to Him: *And to God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and what is even between the two. And to Him is the Homecoming!* **(5:18)** It goes without saying that the owner is different from what is owned. Limitless as He is in His glory, His will is absolute and to Him will all return.

A renewed address is then made to the people given earlier revelations in order to allow them no excuse whatsoever. They are made to visualize most clearly their eventual destiny: **(5:19)**

With such decisive clarity, all issues are made plain. No longer can the people of earlier revelations claim that the unlettered Messenger has not been sent to them. God tells them: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you the way of life—after an interval without Messengers—so that you say not: There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings or a warner. Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner.* **(5:19)** No longer can they profess that they have not been warned or given good news for a long period which might have allowed forgetfulness or deviation to creep in. Now someone to warn them and to give them happy news has come to them.

They are reminded that nothing can resist God's power; nothing can defy Him. He can send a Messenger from among the unlettered nation and He can punish the people given revelations earlier for what they may earn: *And God is Powerful over everything.* **(5:19)**

Thus, this round of confrontation with peoples of earlier revelations comes to an end. It has exposed their deviant beliefs which they introduced in the true faith preached by their messengers. It states most clearly the only faith which God accepts from believers and pronounces as false all their excuses which they reiterate in justification of their negative attitude to the unlettered Messenger, Muhammad. It calls on them to follow the divine guidance on the one hand and weakens the effects of their scheming against the Muslim community on the other. Moreover, the way the Muslim community and all those who seek guidance must follow is clearly marked out.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evi-

dence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What else do I want to say about it and why?
What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?
What are we evaluating? Why?
Given these reasons or differences, can we generalize and list criteria?
Can we describe what to look for when judging an unjust person?
What features does an unjust person need to have? Why?

#### ANALYZING OR EVALUATING

What are the arguments given in the above signs?
What would someone who disagreed with these arguments say?
How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

Evaluating Reasoning by:•
Using specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them
Clarifying issues, conclusions, values, and words
Developing criteria for evaluation
Recognizing and pinpointing contradictions
Distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

### SIGNS 5:20-5:26

**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:20)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:21)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:22)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:23)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:24)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:25)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Moses (5:26)**

## LESSON 112(4). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION

### DEVELOPING SENSITIVITY TO RELEVANCE

You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. Another technique for developing your sensitivity to relevance is to change an issue slightly and compare what was relevant to the first issue to what is relevant to the second. You could read the section and signs with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. You could then share and discuss your lists. You can then discover that sometimes you must argue for the relevance of a particular fact to an issue. You may assume that they have to use all information they are given to ask a question. You need to learn how to limit your responses with only the relevant facts. Implications are deduced from information after the information is interpreted and given a meaning.

Learn to distinguish relevant from irrelevant facts. This is not always clear and, therefore, should be part of a classroom discussion. You should also be aware that a fact that is relevant for one situation may not be relevant to a different one.

When discussing an issue, solution to a problem, or when giving reasons for a conclusion, you can practice limiting your remarks to facts which are relevant to that or conclusion. Don't assume that all information given has to be used to solve a problem. Life does not sort relevant from irrelevant information for us. Make a case for the pertinence of your remarks, and see when your remarks are irrelevant.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

## SIGNS 5:27-5:34

**Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:27)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:28)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:29)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:30)**
**Madinah: Book 25: Cain and Abel (5:31)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:32)**

*The only recompense for those who war against God*
*and His Messenger and hasten about corrupting*
*in and on the earth,*
*is that they be killed or caused to be crucified*
*or their hands and their feet be cut off on opposite sides*
*or they be expelled from the region.*
*That for them is their degradation in the present.*

*And for them in the world to come,*
*there is a tremendous punishment,* (5:33)
*but for those who repented before you have power over them.*
*So know you that God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (5:34)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE JUST PUNISHMENT FOR REBELLION

The Chapter lays down the punishment for the crime that such wicked elements commit. This is known in the Quranic legal code as the punishment for waging war against the Quranic message: **(5:33-5:34)**

The crime to which this legislative statement refers involves rebellion against a Muslim ruler who implements the laws of the Quranic message. The rebels gather in a group renouncing the ruler's authority. They cause fear among the Muslim community living in the Muslim land and they commit aggression against their lives and property. Some scholars also make it a condition that this should take place away from the areas where the ruler's authority is enforced. Others suggest that the very fact that such rebels begin to gather and use force in aggression against the people of the land of the Quranic message, makes this legal provision applicable to them wherever they are.

Let us consider a situation where an armed group rebels against the authority of a Muslim ruler who is implementing the Quranic law and threatens the lives and properties of Muslims living in the land of the Quranic message. The punishment for those who join such a group is death, or crucifixion, (although some scholars say that they should be crucified after they are put to death, in order to frighten others) or to cut off their right hands and left feet.

*And for them in the world to come, there is a tremendous punishment.* **(5:33)** This means that their punishment in this life does not waive the punishment of the Hereafter, as it is the case in certain other crimes. This empathizes the gravity of crime and doubles its punishment. The reason being that the Muslim community should live in peace and security in the land of the Quranic message and that the Muslim ruler who implements the Quranic rules should be obeyed. Such a social set up and such a just and perfect system deserves to be protected against any design to undermine it.

If the rebels come to realize their mistake and turn to God in repentance when they still have their strength, then their punishment is waived and the Muslim ruler has no way of punishing them. God will forgive them eventually: *But for those who repented before you have power over them. So know you that God is Forgiving, Compas-*

*sionate.* **(5:34)**

The wisdom behind discounting the crime and waiving punishment in this case is clear. For one thing, it is an appreciation of their repentance where they still have their power. It is taken as evidence of their good intentions. For another, they are encouraged to repent so that the Muslim nation is spared the need to fight them.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### QUESTIONS

How would you answer the Quranic question?

What are the implications of the fact that no burdened soul will bear an other's heavy load?

What issues are the sign addressing?

Are you addressing this same issue or raising a new one?

Read a chapter of the Quran with one or more issues in mind and note relevant details. Share and discuss your lists.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I understand what a rhetorical question is.

I realize the importance of the Quran saying that no one will bear the results of another person's actions.

It is an important Quranic concept that each person is responsible for their own beliefs and actions.

## LESSON 112(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:35-5:43

**Madinah:** *O those who believed! Be conscious of God*
*and look for an approach to Him and struggle in His way*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.* (5:35)
*Truly, those who were ungrateful,*
*if they had whatever is in and on the earth*
*and the like of it with as much again that they offer it as ransom*
*from the punishment on the Day of Resurrection,*
*it would not be received from them*
*and for them is a painful punishment.* (5:36)
*They will want to go forth from the fire,*
*but they will not be ones who go forth from it.*
*And for them is an abiding punishment.* (5:37)
*And as for the one who is a male thief*
*and the one who is a female thief, then,*
*sever their hands as recompense for what they earned,*
*an exemplary punishment from God.*
*And God is Almighty, Wise.* (5:38)
*But whoever repents after his injustice and made things right,*
*then, truly, God will turn to him in forgiveness.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (5:39)
*Have you not known that to God,*
*to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth?*
*He punishes whom He wills and He forgives whom He wills.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (5:40)
*O Messenger! Let them not dishearten you*
*—those who compete with one another*
*in ingratitude among those who said:*
*We believed with their mouths while their hearts believe not.*
*And among those who became Jews are ones who hearken to lies,*
*ones who hearken to folk of others who approach not you.*
*They tamper with the words out of context.*
*They say: If you were given this, then, take it,*
*but if you are not given this, then, beware!*

*And for whomever God wants to test,*
*you will never have sway over him against God at all.*
*Those are whom God wants not to purify their hearts.*
*For them in the present is degradation.*
*And for them in the world to come*
*is a tremendous punishment.* (5:41)
*They are ones who hearken to lies,*
*the ones who devour the wrongful.*
*Then, if they drew near you, then, give you judgment between them*
*or turn aside from them.*
*And if you have turned aside from them,*
*then, they will never injure you at all.*
*And if you had given judgment,*
*then, give judgment between them with equity.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who act justly.* (5:42)
*And how will they make you their judge*
*while with them is the Torah wherein is the determination of God?*
*Yet, again, after that, they turn away.*
*Those are the ones who believe not.* (5:43)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE HUMAN BEING'S ACTIONS DETERMINE HIS FUTURE

An important feature of the divine method of molding human society is that it does not rely solely on legislative action. It certainly arms itself with legal provisions in order to deter those who only fear the force of the law. Indeed, it relies primarily on educative action which smoothes over the rough edges of people's characters. It provides guidance to the human spirit as it establishes a society that helps the seeds of goodness to grow and gives harmful weeds no fertile soil. The previous signs spoke of very stern punishments for serious crimes. However, once the punishments are outlined, so as to ensure their deterrent effect, the Chapter addresses people's consciences and spirits, aiming to strengthen faith and consciousness of one's obligations towards God. It urges people to seek proper ways of moving nearer to what pleases God and to strive hard in His cause, so that they may be successful. This is coupled with a warning against disbelief and a vivid description of what awaits disbelievers in the Hereafter.. **(5:35-5:37)**

*O those who believed! Be conscious of God and look for an approach to Him and struggle in His way so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(5:35)** Be conscious of God and seek the proper approaches which bring you nearer to Him. Try always to be in contact with Him.

The Chapter portrays a scene of the ungratefuls who neither fear

God nor seek the means to come to Him. As such, they will never prosper. It is a very vivid description, because the Chapter does not only give a statement outlining a position, but depicts a full scene with movement and interaction. This is, indeed, the Quranic method used in portraying scenes of the Day of Judgment. The Quran uses it for most purposes: **(5:36-5:37)**

### A SEVERE PUNISHMENT FOR THEFT

This is followed by a legislation outlining the punishment for theft: **(5:38-5:40)** Where any doubt exists, enforcement of the punishment is blocked. If it is suspected that the person concerned stole food to eat when he was hungry, or to meet a particular need, or if it is suspected that he had a share in the stolen property, then these are reasons which prevent his hands from being cut off. If the theft is proven through personal confession without there being witnesses to give evidence, then withdrawal of the confession is sufficient to prevent enforcement of the punishment. Similarly, if the witnesses recant, punishment is not enforced.

God, who is the Most Compassionate of all those who exercise mercy, says as He makes the punishment for theft so severe: *And as for the one who is a male thief and the one who is a female thief, then, sever their hands as recompense for what they earned, an exemplary punishment from God. And God is Almighty, Wise.* **(5:38)** It is, then, a stern punishment meant to be a deterrent. To deter someone from committing a crime is an act of mercy to that person, because he is prevented from becoming a criminal. It is also an act of grace to the whole community, because it ensures peace and security. No one may claim to be more merciful to people than God who created them except one with a blind mind and a dull soul. Practical evidence shows that this punishment was not enforced except in a handful of cases during a period approaching a whole century at the beginning of the Quranic message. This is because the Quranic society, with its own system and severe punishments and the safeguards it puts in place, did not witness any more crimes.

God then opens the door for anyone who wishes to repent and mend his ways, adding to that a demonstration of positive intent through good action: *But whoever repents after his injustice and made things right, then, truly, God will turn to him in forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(5:39)**

Finally the Chapter states the overall principle of punishment in this life and in the Hereafter. God, the Creator and Owner of the universe, can will anything and determine the fate of every creature. It is He who enacts legislation for people to implement in their lives, and it is He who rewards them for their actions both in this life and

in the life to come: *Have you not known that to God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth? He punishes whom He wills and He forgives whom He wills. And God is Powerful over everything.* **(5:40)** It is then a single authority of dominion which issues legislation in this life and administers reward and retribution in the life to come. There is no division or multiplicity of authority. Indeed, human life can only be set right when the authority to legislate and to reward is united in both this life and the life to come. *And how will they make you their judge while with them is the Torah wherein is the determination of God? Yet, again, after that, they turn away. Those are the ones who believe not.* **(5:43)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one of the signs in this section based on Quranic Critical Thinking criteria.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I tried to find the key concept of the course during the first couple of class meetings.

I was able to relate that definition to each segment of what I learned afterward.

I realized that fundamental ideas are the basis for all others.

## LESSON 112(6). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSIONS

Quranic critical thinkers have learned on which evidence to base their conclusion. They can insightfully discuss evidence relevant to the issue or conclusions they consider. They scrutinize and evaluate factual claims.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

## SIGNS 5:44-5:50

**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob** (5:44)
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob** (5:45)
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary** (5:46)
**Madinah: Book 28: People of the Gospel** (5:47)
*And We caused the Book to descend to you with The Truth,*
*that which establishes as true what was before it of the Book*
*and that which preserves it.*
*So give judgment between them by what God caused to descend.*
*And follow not their desires that drew near you against The Truth.*
*For each among you We made a divine law and an open road.*
*And if God willed, He would have made you one community*
*to try you with what He gave you so be forward in good deeds.*
*To God is your return altogether.*
*Then, He will tell you about*
*what you had been at variance in it.* (5:48)
*And give judgment between them by what God caused to descend*
*and follow not their desires and beware of them*
*so that they tempt you not*
*from some of what God caused to descend to you.*
*And if they turned away, then, know that God only wants*
*that He light on them for some of their impieties.*
*And, truly, many within humanity are ones who disobey.* (5:49)
*Look they for a determination of Age of Ignorance?*
*And who is fairer than God in determination*
*for a folk who are certain?* (5:50)

### COMMENTARY°

#### A BOOK TO SUPERSEDE ALL SCRIPTURES

Having spoken about earlier divine messages and laws, the Chapter now speaks of the final message which embodies the Quranic message in its final a complete form. It is the religion revealed for all humanity, giving a law which supersedes all preceding laws and forms the final arbiter in all affairs and disputes. It outlines

a way of life which regulates all aspects of all human activities and gives a basis for the formulation of a concept of faith, a social system and a code for personal and social behavior. None of this is given as an academic exercise. It must be implemented in full. Nothing of it may be substituted by something else. People either accept this and be true Muslims, or refuse it and follow ignorance and vain desires. No one may justify any deviation by claiming that he is uniting people by being flexible in matters of religion. Had God so willed, He would have made all humanity a single community. What tie He wants of us is to implement His law and let people decide on how they want to conduct their lives. **(5:48-5:50)**

*And We caused the Book to descend to you with The Truth,* **(5:48)** Since it is revealed by God, the only One who has the authority to enact laws, then it certainly sets forth the truth. Everything that it contains of matters of faith, law, directives and stories are true.

Therefore, it is the Book of the truth. Moreover, it *establishes as true what was before it of the Book and that which preserves it.* **(5:48)** It, thus, provides the final version of the divine faith. It is the final arbiter not only in this regard, but also with regard to the way of life humanity should follow, the legislation that should be implemented and the system that should be established. No modification is admissible. Any disagreement over any of these matters, whether between followers of divine religions or between Muslims themselves, must be referred to this Book. No opinion advanced by any human being has any value unless it is supported by this final authority.

As this is an undeniable fact, it must have its practical implementation: *So give judgment between them by what God caused to descend. And follow not their desires that drew near you against The Truth.* **(5:48)** This command is addressed in the first instance to God's Messenger with respect to those of the followers of earlier religions who came to him for arbitration. But its import is not confined to this particular aspect. It is a general order, applicable till the end of time since there will never be a new messenger or a new message to modify anything in this final version of God's message to humanity.

### THE TEMPTATION TO ABANDON GOD'S LAW

It is a false notion to try to unite people at the expense of God's law. Moreover, the attempt is bound to fail. The price asked is too high, since any modification of God's law will lead to corruption on earth, injustice and the subservience of some people to others. This is, indeed, a great evil. If no compromise of God's law is admissible

for pursuing the noble purpose of uniting people, how can it be justified for something which is more petty. Some of those who claim to be Muslims argue that God's law should not be implemented so that we do not lose the tourist trade! Absurdity knows no limit! **(5:49-5:50)**

Again, this principle is stated with greater clarity. In the first statement, the Messenger is instructed in these words: *For each among you We made a divine law and an open road. And if God willed, He would have made you one community to try you with what He gave you so be forward in good deeds. To God is your return altogether. Then, He will tell you about what you had been at variance in it.* **(5:48)** This statement may be construed as meaning abandoning God's law in total and following their vain desires in preference to it. In the second part, the Messenger is warned against compromising even a portion of what has been revealed to him: *And give judgment between them by what God caused to descend and follow not their desires and beware of them so that they tempt you not from some of what God caused to descend to you.* **(5:49)** The warning here is more precise, stricter and stronger. It also states the matter in its true nature. It is a temptation which must be resisted. The choice is either to implement God's law in full, or to follow vain desires.

At that time, they had the choice whether to refer their disputes to God's law, a choice which was later abrogated in the land of the Quranic message. God's law has to be implemented except in those areas where the followers of other religions have specific provisions. These they are allowed to implement. As this was the case, the Messenger is told not to worry about them if they do not like his commitment to every detail of God's law or if they turn away from the Quranic message: *And if they turned away, then, know that God only wants that He light on them for some of their impieties. And, truly, many within humanity are ones who disobey.* **(5:49)** Do not worry about them if they turn away. Do not let their attitude weaken your resolve to implement God's law in full. It is they who will suffer as a result of their turning away because God will then afflict them with their sins. Neither the Messenger, nor the Muslim community, nor indeed God's law will come to any harm as a result of their turning away. Moreover, it is in human nature that many people will transgress. The Messenger is told that he has no say in this state of affairs. Nor is it the fault of God's law. It is they who will not follow the right path.

Having made it absolutely clear to all believers that nothing of the provisions of God's law will be compromised for any purpose and under any circumstances, the Chapter then contrasts the choices

available. It is either God's law or man-made law, based on inadequate knowledge and vain desire. There can be no meeting ground between the two. *Look they for a determination of Age of Ignorance? And who is fairer than God in determination for a folk who are certain?* **(5:50)**

This statement defines the meaning of *jahiliyyah*, rendered here as "pagan ignorance", as the term is used in the Quran. *Jahiliyyah* means that people are ruled by people, because this signifies that they submit to one another. They refuse to submit to God alone and reject His Godhead, acknowledging instead that some human beings have qualities of Godhead and hence they submit to their authority. As such, the term pagan ignorance, or jahiliyyah, does not refer to a particular period of time, but to a certain situation which may come into existence at any time. Whenever it exists, it must be described as jahiliyyah which is in contrast to the Quranic message.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

Does this description stick to the facts?
Or, is reasoning or response included?
Is this something that can be directly seen?
Or would you have to interpret what you saw to arrive at this statement?
Is this how anyone would describe the situation?
Or would someone else see it differently?
What alternative descriptions or explanations are there?

Students could then examine the assumptions and inferences underlying the alternatives.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to give reasons for my statements.
I am also able to develop alternative explanations.

## LESSON 112(7). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
### HOW TO APPROACH THE QURAN

Quranic critical readers approach the sacred text with a view to entering a silent dialogue with God. They realize they must actively reconstruct God's meaning. They read because there is much that they know they do not know, much to experience that they have not experienced. Thus, critical readers do not simply pass their eyes over the words with the intention of filling their memories. They question, organize, interpret, synthesize, and digest what they read. They question, not only what was said, but also what was implied and presupposed. They organize the details, not only around key ideas in the work, but also around their own key ideas. They not only conclude, they recognize their conclusions as conclusions, and consider alternative conclusions.•

Recognizing your conclusions as such, you revise and refine them. You do not simply accept or reject; you work to make ideas your own, accepting what makes most sense, rejecting what does not fit your new understanding into their existing frameworks of thought.

### WHAT IS AN IMPLICATION, CONCLUSION?

In Quranic Studies you learn to come to conclusions based on conditional reasoning (if ... then ...) given in the particular Quranic signs you are studying where a major general premise combines with a more specific minor premise. As you study the Quranic signs, you should look for information and then separate the information from the conclusion.

To reach a conclusion, respond with your own conception of what you are studying. Place it in the context of your own experience, perspective, point of view, or philosophy. For example, you may conclude from the silence of another person towards you as an expression of hostility. This conclusion may or may not be correct. It may be based on your own patterns of motivation and behavior that you projected onto the other person.

Conclusions should be distinguished from the facts, the evidence, the situation. The best conclusions take the most evidence into account. Critical thinkers recognize the conclusions of the Quranic signs they are studying, distinguish them from evidence, consider alternative interpretations, and reconsider their interpretations in the light of new evidence.

### ALL LEARNING INVOLVES:

All learning involves personal interpretation, since whatever you learn you must integrate into your own thinking and action. What you learn must be given a meaning by you, must be meaningful to you, and therefore involves interpretive acts on your part.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:51-5:56

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors.*
*Some of them are protectors of one another.*
*And whoever among you turns away to them,*
*then, he is of them.*
*Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* (5:51)
*And you have seen those who in their hearts is a sickness.*
*They compete with one another.*
*They say: We dread that a turn of fortune should light on us.*
*Then, perhaps God brings a victory or a command from Him?*
*Then, they will become—from what they kept secret*
*within themselves—ones who are remorseful.* (5:52)
*And those who believed will say:*
*Are these they who swore an oath by God—*
*the most earnest of sworn oaths—*
*that they were with you?*
*Their actions were fruitless.*
*They became ones who are losers.* (5:53)
*O those who believed!*
*Whoever of you goes back on his way of life,*
*God will bring the folk whom He loves and whom love Him,*
*humble-spirited towards the ones who believe,*
*disdainful towards the ones who are ungrateful.*
*They struggle in the way of God and they fear not the reproach*
*of one who is reproached.*
*That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills.*
*And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* (5:54)
*Your protector is only God and His Messenger*
*and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer*
*and give the purifying alms*
*and they are ones who bow down.* (5:55)
*And whoever turns in friendship to God and His Messenger*
*and those who believed, then, behold the Party of God.*
*They are the ones who are victors.* (5:56)

### COMMENTARY°

#### ALLIANCES THAT CANNOT SURVIVE

It is most important to begin by defining the meaning of the alliance the believers are forbidden by God to maintain with the Jews

and Christians. **(5:51-5:53)** It is to establish a relationship of mutual support so as to forge one block with them. It has nothing to do with following their faith. It is extremely unlikely that we find among Muslims anyone who may be inclined to follow the Jewish or Christian faith. It is rather the type of alliance involving mutual help that was unclear to some Muslims who initially thought it permissible. It was a fact of life that there were mutual ties and interests between the Arabs in Madinah and groups of Jews. These developed into alliances between the two prior to the Quranic message and continued in the early days after most Arabs in Madinah adopted the Quranic message. Later, God ordered the Muslims not to enter into such alliances with the Jews of Madinah.

The naive among us tend to overlook this truth when we think that we can establish an alliance with the people of earlier revelations, i.e. the Christians and Jews, in order to check the advance of materialism and atheism, since we are all people of faith. We forget the teachings of the Quran and the lessons of history. Those very people of earlier revelations used to say to the pagan Arabs that: *Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(4:51)** It is they who stirred the ungrateful and mobilized them into launching a determined attack against the Muslim community in Madinah. Those people of earlier revelations were the ones who launched the Crusades against the land of the Quranic message, which extended over a period of 200 years. It is they who organized the Spanish Inquisition. In recent history, they turned the Muslim Arabs of Palestine out of their land in order to give it to the Jews. In doing so, they were in alliance with atheism and materialism. The same people of earlier revelations persecuted the Muslims in Abyssinia, Somalia, Eritrea, and Algeria. They further collaborated with atheism, materialism and polytheism in the persecution of Muslims in Yugoslavia, China, Turkistan, India and in many other places.

Nevertheless, totally oblivious to such definitive Quranic statements, some of us may entertain thoughts that we can establish a relationship of alliance or patronage with these people of earlier revelations in order to repel the attacks of atheist materialism on religion. Such people do not read the Quran. If they do, they confuse the Quranic message's attitude of tolerance with the forging of an alliance with such people. It is against this that the Quranic message warns the Muslims. Such people do not actually live the Quranic message as the only faith acceptable to God or as an active movement seeking to establish a new order on earth. This new order will inevitably stand up to the hostility of today's people of earlier revelations, just as it repelled it in the past. This positive attitude cannot

change since it is the only natural one. We, therefore, leave such people in their confusion to reflect on this clear Quranic directive: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another. And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(5:51)**

### DISTINCTIVE VALUES OF THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

In the first instance, this sign is an address to the Muslim community in Madinah. It is at the same time directed to every Muslim community which comes into existence in any part of the world at any point in time. Its message is meant for every group that may be described as "believers". The particular occasion which necessitated this address was the need for the Muslims in Madinah to have a clearer view of the ties of allegiance which would mold them into a distinct community, totally separate from the people of earlier revelations. There were ties of alliance, financial dealings, neighborlinesss, friendship, etc. All this was natural in the light of the historical, economical, and social conditions which prevailed in Madinah prior to the advent of the Quranic message.

As Muslims engage in a fight to establish their new system as a living reality, the Quran provides them with the necessary concept to create, in their subconscious, a sense of distinction between them and all those who do not belong to their community. This distinction does not preclude tolerance and kind treatment; for these come naturally to a Muslim. It only precludes a relationship of alliance, of the sort a Muslim owes only to God, His Messenger and the community of believers. All Muslims, in all generations, have this awareness and feel this distinction: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(5:51)**

As this is a permanent fact, its consequences are clearly stated. Since the Jews and the Christians are allies of one another, they can only be patronized by someone of their own kind. If someone from the Quranic camp establishes an alliance with them, he actually removes himself from the Muslim camp, abandons the basic quality of the Quranic message and joins the other camp. For this is the natural and practical result: *And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them.* **(5:51)** He, thus, wrongs himself and wrongs the divine faith of the Muslim community. Because of his wrongdoing, God puts him in the same group with the Jews and Christians to whom he has pledged his support and made himself an ally. God neither guides him to the truth nor returns him to the Muslim ranks:

*Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(5:51)**

### THE BEST INSURANCE FOR THE FUTURE

The Quran describes the conditions which prevailed in Madinah, and against which it warns the Muslims: *They say: We dread that a turn of fortune should light on us.* **(5:52)**

We develop a clear idea of the situation in the Muslim community of Madinah, the relations inherited from pre-the Quranic days and the concepts that were totally clarified about the sort of ties which may and may not exist between the Muslim community and the Jews. It is noteworthy that all these reports speak of the Jews and none of them mention the Christians. Nevertheless, the Quranic sign speaks of both Jews and Christians because it seeks to establish a permanent concept about the ties and situations which could prevail between the Muslim community and other communities, whether they followed earlier revelations or were non-believers, as will be mentioned later in this passage.

The Quranic message and those who claim to be its followers, highly questionable as their claim may be, continue to be at the receiving end of an unabating war launched against them and their faith by Jews and Christians all over the globe. This is the practical confirmation of what God says: *Some of them are protectors of one another.* **(5:51)** Any Muslim who respects his intelligence, should pay heed to His Lord's advice, or indeed His clear command, implementing His final decision to establish a complete distinction between those who are in alliance with God and His Messenger and those who raise a different banner.

### WHEN HYPOCRISY IS LAID BARE

The Quran threatens those who seek the support of the enemies of their religion, the hypocrites, by bringing about victory for the believers or by revealing the truth about the hypocrites: *Then, perhaps God brings a victory or a command from Him? Then, they will become —from what they kept secret within themselves—ones who are remorseful.* **(5:52)** At this point of victory, whether it is here a reference to the conquest of Makkah, or to passing judgement over unclear issues, or to the accomplishment of God's will, those who have disease in their hearts will experience terrible regret over their past attitudes. The believers will wonder at the state of affairs which befalls the hypocrites: *And those who believed will say: Are these they who swore an oath by God—the most earnest of sworn oaths—that they were with you? Their actions were fruitless. They became ones who are losers.* **(5:53)**

## THE QUALITIES OF GOD'S BELOVED PEOPLE

This passage now completes its first address to the believers, requiring them not to seek an alliance with the Jews and Christians and warning them against such relationships because they may lead them to an unintentional renunciation of the faith of the Quranic message. The second address made in this passage goes on to add a new warning to anyone who renounces his faith, either through making such an alliance or otherwise. Such a person has no position with God, even though he cannot get away from God, and he cannot cause harm to His faith. This faith has its own supporters who are well known to God. If the present group turn away from God's faith, He will bring forth others who will take their place. The Chapter describes the main features of this selected group of supporters in pleasant and reassuring terms. It points out the only way to which a Muslim directs his allegiance and it concludes with stating the inevitable outcome of the battle between God's party and other parties. **(5:54-5:56)**

This warning, coming in this fashion at this particular point to those who turn away from faith, is taken to refer, in the first instance, to an equation which places on one side the maintenance of an alliance with the Jews and Christians, and, on the other, turning away from the Quranic message altogether. This is highlighted by what has been said earlier of classifying anyone who seeks to be in alliance with them as one of them, having broken away from the Muslim community: *O those who believed! Take not to yourselves the Jews and the Christians as protectors. Some of them are protectors of one another. And whoever among you turns away to them, then, he is of them. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* **(5:51)** In this light, this second address serves to emphasize the first one. This is further supported by another address which follows later in this Chapter. This third address forbids alliances with the people of earlier revelations and ungratefuls, classifying them all in one group. This means that seeking an alliance with the Christians and Jews is the same as seeking it with ungratefuls. Where the Quranic message provides for extending different treatment to the people of earlier revelations from that extended to ungratefuls does not relate to having an alliance with them. Rather, it concerns different matters altogether. **(5:54)**

## TO LOVE GOD AND BE LOVED BY HIM

The description of the chosen community of believers is remarkable: *God will bring the folk whom He loves and whom love Him.* **(5:54)** This mutual love is indeed remarkable, generating as it does a feeling of strength the believer needs to fulfil his difficult task. He

feels that it is a great honor to have been chosen for this task through which he earns his position of favor, close to God, the Beneficent, the Almighty.

The Chapter gives further details of this community which is dedicated to the service of God's cause: *Humble-spirited towards the ones who believe.* **(5:54)** This humility means that they are affable, gentle, and tolerant. When they deal with other believers, they do not adopt a difficult attitude or show any stubbornness. They are approachable, responsive, friendly. To adopt such an attitude towards believers does not mean any self-humiliation. Indeed, it is an aspect of brotherhood which removes barriers and formalities. One does not feel that one has anything to withhold from one's fellow brothers. It is self-consciousness that makes someone difficult and unamenable. On the other hand, when he feels himself belonging to the group of believers, he has nothing to withhold or begrudge. What can he retain for himself when they have all been united by faith, loving God and being loved by Him, and feeling this sublime love spreading over them?

*Disdainful towards the ones who are ungrateful.* **(5:54)** When they have to deal with ungrateful, they show their dignity and high status. This is the attitude to adopt in such a situation. There is no trace of arrogance or conceit. It is being proud of the faith they have chosen and being honored to fight ungrateful under the banner of faith. It is their unshakable trust in what they have, which is goodness itself, and their knowledge that their role is to make others submit to this goodness. It is not a personal submission by one group of people to another. It is rather a matter of complete trust that the divine faith, God's party, will eventually triumph over all creeds based on personal prejudice and also over ignorance. It is they who will eventually triumph though they may be defeated in certain battles along the way.

*They struggle in the way of God and they fear not the reproach of one who is reproached.* **(5:54)** To strive hard in order to establish the divine system and implement it in human life so as to achieve all that is good for humanity is a distinctive characteristic of the community of believers chosen by God to accomplish His will on earth. They strive hard for God's cause not to serve their own interests, nor the interests of their people, country or race, but rather to establish God's authority through the implementation of His law and to achieve all that is good for humanity. Personally, they gain nothing for themselves from such hard striving. It is all for God's sake.

It is for these reasons that the community of believers strives hard for God's cause without fearing to be criticized or censured by

anyone. This is the mark of the chosen believers. Moreover, that those believers are chosen by God, that there is mutual love between Him and them, that they have their own distinctive characteristic and the reassurance they have to conduct their affairs on the basis of divine guidance are all favors bestowed on them by God: *That is the grace of God. He gives it to whom He wills. And God is One Who is Extensive, Knowing.* **(5:54)** He gives in abundance and He chooses the ones to whom He grants His favous on the basis of perfect knowledge. His grace is abundant, limitless.

God defines for the believers the only group with whom they may have a relationship of patronage and the ones to patronize: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* **(5:55)** The definition is made here in away which leaves no way for liberal interpretation or confusion. Matters have to be so clearly defined because the central issue here is that of faith and its implementation through a movement. Therefore, submission to God must be complete, trust in Him must be absolute, and self-surrender is the only religion. The question is, then, one of a complete distinction between the Muslim camp and all other camps which do not adopt submission to God as a faith and the Quranic law as a way of life. The Quranic movement must be serious in its organization so that it admits no allegiance except to its own leadership. Thus, loyalty and support can exist only between members of the community of believers, because such loyalty and support are based on faith.

### THE PARTY ASSURED OF TRIUMPH

The Quranic message is not a mere title, slogan or verbal claim nor is it a hereditary relationship or a description of people who live in a certain area. The Chapter mentions here some essential characteristics of believers: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* **(5:55)**

*Zakat*, on the other hand, has a specific significance which is indicated by its very name, which means "purifying alms". First and foremost, zakat is purification and growth. It purifies a person's conscience because it is an act of worship and it is paid willingly with a feeling of love towards those who need it, because as a worship its payer expects to be well rewarded for it in the life to come and hopes that his wealth in this life will increase through the implementation of the blessed economic system of the Quranic message. There is also a healthy feeling generated by it among the poor who receive it

because they feel that it is part of God's grace that He has determined its payment to them by the rich. They entertain no grudge against the rich. (It is useful to remind ourselves here that under the Quranic system, the rich earn their money through legitimate means and do not usurp the right of anyone as they earn their income.) Needless to say, *zakat* also achieves the objective of financial taxes in a healthy and satisfactory atmosphere characterized by purity and growth.

The payment of *zakat* is a characteristic of the believers confirming that they implement God's law in their lives. Its very payment is an acknowledgement that God has the authority over all their affairs. This is exactly what is meant by the Quranic message, which is based on total submission to God.

*And they are ones who bow down.* **(5:55)** The way this phrase is expressed in the Arabic original indicates that bowing down in worship is their normal and essential condition. The Quranic sign has already stated that they attend to their prayer, but this second description is even more comprehensive because it makes it appear as if worship is the most prominent characteristic by which they are known. In such contexts, Quranic expressions are very powerful indeed.

In return for having complete trust in Him, and seeking only His support and maintaining a tie of patronage with Him only and, in consequence, with His Messenger and the believers, and in return for a complete split between them and all other camps that do not submit to Him, God promises the believers victory: *And whoever turns in friendship to God and His Messenger and those who believed, then, behold the Party of God. They are the ones who are victors.* **(5:56)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QUESTIONS

What does the Quranic message want to communicate? Why?
What is it talking about? What do I want to say about it?
What else do I want to say about it and why?

What else do I know or think about this?
How is what I am saying like and unlike what others have said?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to use specific analytic techniques, such as making assumptions explicit and evaluating them.
I was able to clarify issues, conclusions, values, and words.
I was able to develop criteria for evaluation.

## Lesson 112(8). Critical Thinking Strategy
## Making Plausible Inferences or Interpretations
### The Middle Community—Islamic Moderation:[3]

Has helped advocate a balanced vision of Islam that is inclusive of the interests both of the individual and society, keeping in sight also its spiritual, rational, and scientific dimensions, just as it seeks to strike a middle ground between traditional and modernist understandings of Islam, not only for the present generation but also for those that follow.

Tends to bind the various dimensions of Islam together under the Quranic principle of *tawhid*, not only as a religion but also a legal system with its own economic and political characteristics.

Strikes a balance between the concerns of continuity and change by safeguarding that which is permanent and unchangeable as opposed to that which is liable to change, keeping the balance. The unchangeable parts of Islam include the pillars of the faith such as devotional duties, and decisive injunctions upheld by universal consensus of the *umma* throughout the ages. This can also be said of the basic principles of law and morality that are numerous, including human dignity, justice, accountability and the rule of law, honesty, trustworthiness, purity and cleanliness, honoring one's parents, fulfillment of promises, sincerity, patience and courage, as well as avoidance of criminality and aggression, theft, murder, lying, and so forth.

The changeable parts of Islam include the rulings of general custom (*urf*), personal reasoning and opinion (*ijtihad* and *fatwa*), especially those that lack a firm textual foundation: rules derived through analogy, juristic preference, and considerations of public interest, which are usually founded in an effective cause and rationale that may well become liable to change with the change of their underlying effective causes.

The unchangeable principles of Islam set in place a structure of values that gives the Muslim community (*umma*) its distinctive identity, and those that are changeable are important for keeping pace with the unfolding changes of custom, science, and civilization.

## Quranic Chapter 5: The Table Spread with Food (al-Maidah)
## Signs 5:57-5:66

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Take not to yourselves those who took to themselves*
*your way of life in mockery and as a pastime*
*from among those who were given the Book before you*
*and the ones who are ungrateful, as protectors.*
*And be conscious of God*
*if you had been ones who believe.* (5:57)

*And when you cried out for formal prayer*
*they took it to themselves in mockery and as a pastime.*
*That is because they are a folk who are not reasonable.* (5:58)
*Say: O People of the Book!*
*Seek you revenge on us because we believed in God*
*and what was caused to descend to us*
*and what was caused to descend before,*
*while, truly, most of you are ones who disobey?* (5:59)
*Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God?*
*He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry*
*and He made some of them into apes and swine*
*who worshiped the false deities.*
*Those are worse placed and ones who go astray*
*from the right way.* (5:60)
*And when they drew near you they said:*
*We believed. And, surely, they entered with ingratitude*
*and they, surely, went forth with it.*
*And God is greater in knowledge*
*of what they had been keeping back.* (5:61)
*And you have seen many of them competing with one another*
*in sin and deep seated dislike and in consuming the wrongful.*
*What they had been doing was miserable.* (5:62)
*Why prohibit not the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars*
*their sayings of sin and their consuming the wrongful?*
*Miserable was what they had been crafting.* (5:63)
*And the Jews said: The hand of God is one that is restricted!*
*Restricted were their hands!*
*And they were cursed for what they said.*
*Nay! His hands are ones that are stretched out:*
*He spends how He wills.*
*And, certainly, many of them increase*
*by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord*
*in defiance and in ingratitude.*
*And We cast among them enmity and hatred*
*until the Day of Resurrection.*
*Whenever they kindled a fire of war,*
*God extinguished it.*
*And they hasten about corrupting in and on the earth.*
*And God loves not the ones who make corruption.* (5:64)
*And if the People of the Book believed*
*and were God-conscious, certainly,*
*We would have absolved them from their evil deeds*
*and caused them to enter into Gardens of Bliss.* (5:65)

*And if they adhered to the Torah and the Gospel—*
*what was caused to descend to them from their Lord,*
*they would, certainly, have eaten in abundance*
*from above them and from beneath their feet.*
*Among them is a community*
*of ones who halt between two opinions.*
*But many of them, how evil is what they do!* (5:66)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHEN FAITH AND PRAYERS ARE MOCKED

The approach utilised in this Chapter adopts several ways to impress on the believers the prohibition of taking as allies those who follow a faith different to their own, be they followers of earlier revelations or ungratefuls associating partners with God. The aim of using such different methods is to make this rule of faith well established in their minds and consciences. This, in turn, indicates how important this rule is in the overall the Quranic concept and the methods adopted by the Quranic movement.

In the first address, as we have seen, a straightforward prohibition has been emphasized, coupled with a warning that God may well bring about victory for the believers or bring about some other event of His own making, and thus the reality which the hypocrites try hard to cover up will be laid bare. In the second address, a warning is given against the renunciation of faith through the establishment of an alliance with the enemies of God, His Messenger and the believers. This is coupled with raising the far better prospect of belonging to the selected group who love God and are loved by Him, with the additional promise of victory to God's party.

Now this passage adds a third address to the believers, appealing to them to defend their faith, worship and prayers which are mocked at and made a jest of by their enemies. Alliances with the people of earlier revelations or with ungratefuls is forbidden in the same way. This prohibition is made directly relevant to fearing God. Belonging to the community of believers is made conditional on compliance with it. The actions of the ungratefuls and the people of earlier revelations are shown in their true light and they are described as having no reason: **(5:57-5:58)**

### FINDING FAULT WITH DEDICATED BELIEVERS

When all these addresses to the believers have been completed, the Chapter instructs the Messenger to put a direct question to the people of the Scriptures: What fault do they find with the Muslim community? Do they take anything against it other than the fact that

Muslims believe in God and in His past revelations, as well as His revelations to the Messenger of the Quranic message? In other words, the only fault they find with the Muslims is that the Muslims are believers, while they, i.e. the people of earlier revelations, are mostly transgressors. It is a confrontation that is embarrassing and decisive at the same time, because it points out the true cause of hostility. **(5:59-5:60)**

In this Chapter, God tells the Prophet that it is time to confront the people of earlier revelations with the truth which shapes their motives and provides the logic behind their attitude: *Say: O People of the Book! Seek you revenge on us because we believed in God and what was caused to descend to us and what was caused to descend before, while, truly, most of you are ones who disobey?* **(5:59)**

### THOSE IN THE WORST POSITION OF ALL

The Chapter then refers to some events pertaining to the history of the people of earlier revelations, their past attitude towards their Lord and the painful punishment awaiting them: *Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God? He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry and He made some of them into apes and swine who worshiped the false deities. Those are worse placed and ones who go astray from the right way.* **(5:60)**

Here we are face to face with the Jews and their history. It is they whom God has rejected and who have incurred His anger, and whom He has turned into apes and pigs for worshipping false gods. The first three points to which reference is made here are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran. Their worship of false gods needs to be explained here because it has particular significance in the context of this Chapter.

The expression "false gods" refers in the Quranic context to every authority that is not derived from God's own authority, every system of government that does not have God's law as its basis, and to every aggression exceeding the boundaries of what is right. The worst type of aggression which the Arabic term *taghut*, rendered here as "false gods", relates is that made against God's authority, and His Godhead. The people of earlier revelations did not worship rabbis and monks, but they followed their rule in preference to that of God's. Therefore, God describes them as their worshippers and terms them polytheists. It is to this fine point that reference is made here. They worshipped false gods in the sense that they obeyed tyrannical authorities in so far as they exceeded their rightful limits. They worshipped them not in the sense of bowing and prostrating themselves before them, but by simply obeying and following them. This is, indeed, a type of worship which removes its perpetrator from the ranks of God's worshippers who follow His faith.

God directs His Messenger to confront the people of earlier revelations with this history and the punishment they have incurred, as if they are one generation, since they all share the same deviant nature. The Messenger is directed to tell them that the result of such an attitude is much worse: *Say: Will I tell you of worse than that as a reward from God?* **(5:60)** This means that they incur something much worse than those people of earlier revelations who preceded them. Incomparable indeed is God's anger and His retribution. Here, we have His verdict that those people of earlier revelations have turned away from the right path: *He whom God cursed and with whom He was angry and He made some of them into apes and swine who worshiped the false deities. Those are worse placed and ones who go astray from the right way.* **(5:60)**

### THE EXPOSURE OF A HORRID NATURE

The Chapter continues to warn the Muslims against fraternizing with them, by exposing their qualities and features, after having referred briefly to their history and punishment. Their schemes are exposed in order that the Muslims be warned against them. The Jews feature prominently here because the Chapter speaks of actual events, most of which were perpetrated by them:

When they come to you, they say: "We believe," whereas, in fact, they come ungratefuls and depart ungratefuls. God is fully aware of all that they would conceal. You see many of them rushing into sin and transgression and in devouring the fruits of unlawful gain. Evil indeed is that which they do. Why do not their divines and their rabbis forbid them to make sinful assertions and to devour the fruits of unlawful gain? Evil indeed is that which they contrive. The Jews say: **(5:61-5:64)**

With these words, the Chapter draws moving pictures and living scenes in front of our eyes. Despite the passage of centuries, the reader of these signs visualizes the Jewish people to whom the Quran most probably refers. Although the context applies to the Jews, it is possible, however, that it also refers to some of the hypocrites in Madinah. Those hypocrites would go to the Muslims claiming to be believers. Nevertheless, they held on to their disbelief in all situations, whether coming or going, yet all the while their tongues stated something altogether different.

*And God is greater in knowledge of what they had been keeping back.* **(5:61)** God makes this statement of truth in order to reassure the believers that their Lord will look after them and will not abandon them to the schemes of their enemies. He is fully aware of their

scheming. Therefore, He warns its perpetrators, calling on them to abandon their nefarious ways.

### A Confirmed Attitude of Ingratitude

The Chapter moves on to draw a vivid picture of what these people do, as if we see their movements and actions through the words. *And you have seen many of them competing with one another in sin and deep seated dislike and in consuming the wrongful.* **(5:62)** They are depicted as if they are racing at full speed towards sin and aggression, devouring all that is unlawful. Although this picture is drawn here to denounce those people and to show how ugly they appear, it depicts a certain condition of individuals and communities when they become infested with corruption, lose their values, and give in to evil. When we look at communities that have so degenerated, it appears to us as if all these people race towards evil, plunge into sin and aggression. The strong and the weak among them are alike in such actions. In corrupt societies, sin and aggression are not the monopoly of the powerful. Even the weak move with the tide of sin. It is true that they cannot assault the strong, but some of them can assault others and violate what God has sanctified. In corrupt societies, what God has restricted has become subject to violation, because neither the ruler nor the ruled are ready to honor God's action. When a society becomes corrupt, sin and aggression feature high among its characteristics. *What they had been doing was miserable.* **(5:62)**

The Chapter points out another characteristic of corrupt societies, as it denounces the silence adopted by divines and rabbis, supposedly those scholars who guard the implementation of divine law. Instead, they remain silent when they see their people plunging into sin and aggression and devouring what is unlawful, when they should be condemning such practices: *Why prohibit not the rabbis and learned Jewish scholars their sayings of sin and their consuming the wrongful? Miserable was what they had been crafting.* **(5:63)** This is, indeed, a feature of societies that are on the verge of collapse, after becoming corrupt. As described in the Quran, the Children of Jacob used not to counsel each other against committing evil.

As an example of their most ghastly and sinful assertions, the Quran tells us of the following statement made by the Jews: *And the Jews said: The hand of God is one that is restricted!* **(5:64)** Such a statement is the outcome of the Jews' wrong concept of God, limitless is He in His glory. The Quran has given us many examples of the results of this wrong concept. When they were told to give money in charity they said: God is poor and we are rich.

The answer to them asserts that they are the ones to be described in such terms, and furthermore that they are cursed and deprived of

God's mercy: *Restricted were their hands! And they were cursed for what they said.* **(5:64)** This is indeed an apt description, for they are the most stingy and miserly people on earth. Then, God is described by His most appropriate attribute, whereby He bestows His limitless bounty on His servants: *Nay! His hands are ones that are stretched out: He spends how He wills.* **(5:64)** His inexhaustible bounty is apparent to everyone. It gives irrefutable proof of His limitless grace, giving testimony to His outstretched hands. It speaks in every language, but the Jews do not hear it, because they are preoccupied with gathering as much gain as they can, using obscene language even when they speak of God Himself.

God tells His Messenger about what those people will do and what will happen to them because of the grudge they harbour against him. He further describes the hostility they show the Messenger because God has chosen him to be His Messenger and because his message exposes their attitude, both past and present: *And, certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and in ingratitude.* **(5:64)** Having refused to accept the faith, it was inevitable that they should go to the other extreme and remain entrenched in their arrogance and disbelief. Therefore, God's Messenger will bring mercy to believers and divine punishment to ungratefuls.

God then tells His Messenger of the inevitability of His will to cause enmity and hatred among them, and to render their schemes futile even when they are at their strongest. Therefore, their war against the Muslim community will end in defeat: *And We cast among them enmity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection.* **(5:64)**

When the Muslim nation returns to the Quranic message, truly believes in it and conducts its whole life in accordance with the Quranic law and constitution, God's warning to His most evil creatures will come true. The Jews know this and they use all their power and wicked scheming against the advocates of the Quranic revival throughout the world. They level at them, through their puppets and stooges, brutal blows in total disregard of all laws and values. God, will, however, accomplish His will. His promise will certainly come true: *Whenever they kindled a fire of war, God extinguished it.* **(5:64)**

The evil and corruption which the Jews represent will inevitably be smashed by God's will. For God does not like corruption to spread on earth. What God does not like will certainly be removed and uprooted by some of His servants, whom He entrusts with this task: *And they hasten about corrupting in and on the earth. And God loves not the ones who make corruption.* **(5:64)**

### ADVANCE RESULTS OF IMPLEMENTING DIVINE LAW

The passage is concluded with a statement of a basic rule that people's implementation of faith in their lives ensures the achievement of goodness and prosperity in the life of believers in this world as well as the next. Faith provides a single code of living which looks after the material and the spiritual aspects of life. This rule is stated in connection with the discussion of the deviation of the people of earlier revelations from proper divine faith, to their devouring unlawful gains, and their distortion of God's words in order to achieve immediate gain. Had they followed the divine faith, they would have benefited in this world as well as in the world to come. **(5:65-5:66)**

These two signs then tell us that to believe and to be God-conscious, to implement God's law in human life ensures more than the reward of the Hereafter, which is certainly the better and longer-lasting reward. To take such a course also ensures a healthy type of life and a good reward in this present world in the shape of prosperity and affluence. This is described in a tangible form, bringing the meaning of affluence before our eyes: *they would, certainly, have eaten in abundance from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them is a community of ones who halt between two opinions. But many of them, how evil is what they do!* **(5:66)** This shows that ensuring a good reward in the Hereafter does not have a special way, separate or independent from that which ensures a good, prosperous life in this world. It is the same way, giving the best results in both this life and the life to come. If it is abandoned, then life in this world becomes corrupt and the life to come is lost. This single way is that of faith, being God-conscious and implementing divine law.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?

5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

Analyze one or more of the signs in this section according to the eight points of reasoning above.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to understand what Islamic Moderation is.
I was able to think of ways to implement Islamic Moderation in my life

## LESSON 112(9). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS

Consistency is a fundamental—some would say the defining—ideal of critical thinkers. They strive to remove contradictions from their beliefs, and are wary of contradictions in others. As would-be fair-minded thinkers they strive to judge like cases in a like manner. Perhaps the most difficult form of consistency to achieve is that between word and deed. Even though many of us may believe in the Day of Resurrection, when our words expressing belief are not consistent with our actions, this is a sign of a contradiction. Self-serving double standards are one of the most common problems in human life. Children are in some sense aware of the importance of consistency when they ask their parents: Why don't I get to do what you get to do? They are frustrated by double standards, yet are given little help in getting insight into them and dealing with them.

Critical thinkers can pinpoint specifically where opposing arguments or views contradict each other, distinguishing the contradictions from compatible beliefs, thus focussing their analyses of conflicting views such as being a Muslim, but not believing or practicing his or her faith with an eye to the Day of Resurrection.

When discussing conflicting lines of reasoning, inconsistent versions of the same story, or egocentric reasoning or behavior, Quranic critical thinkers can be encouraged to bring out both views and practice recognizing contradictions as the example to follow shows.

Here we present two different translations of Quranic signs for a classroom discussion. The Quranic message and Islam, in general, encourages marriage and discourages divorce. Discuss your views on the two different versions and if you interpret a contradiction between the signs 4:34 and 2:231.

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, ***The Study Quran***)

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty,*

*Great.* (4:34, ***The Sublime Quran***)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, ***The Study Quran***)

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. And be conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, ***The Sublime Quran***)

After this study in possible contradictions created through interpretation of Quranic signs, we turn to the Quranic chapter for this lesson where we find a contradiction between thought and deed of those who want to act immorally and yet ask: *When is this Day of Resurrection?* The Quran explains what will happen that Day. It says that those who wanted to act immorally will face the contradiction between their words and deeds by asking: *Where is the place to run to?* The Quran says: *There is no refuge from it so follow the Recitation (al_Quran).*

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:67-5:77

**Arafat:** *O Messenger!*
*State what was caused to descend to you from your Lord,*
*for if you have not accomplished it,*
*then, you will not have stated His message.*
*And God will save you from the harm of humanity.*
*Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (5:67)
**Madinah:** *Say: O People of the Book!*
*You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah*
*and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you*
*from your Lord.*
*And, certainly, many of them increase*
*by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord*

*in defiance and ingratitude.*
*So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (5:68)
*Truly, those who believed, those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* (5:69)
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:70)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:71)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:72)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:73)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:74)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:75)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:76)**
**Madinah: Book 27: Children of Jacob (5:77)**

## COMMENTARY°

### A VITAL PROCLAMATION TO DELIVER GOD'S MESSAGE

The Messenger is given clear instructions **(5:67-5:69)** to convey all that has been revealed to him by His Lord, allowing no room for any reservations as he declares the truth. Otherwise, he would not be fulfilling his duty as a Messenger entrusted with conveying God's message. It is God who will protect him against all humanity. Whoever enjoys God's protection has nothing to fear from other humans, powerless as they are.

*Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* **(5:67)** If so, let the word of truth be clear, decisive, and final. The truth is accepted by a heart which is open, responsive. It is not accepted as a result of patting the shoulders of those who do not possess such qualities.

In this Chapter, his duty is stated clearly: *O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord, for if **you** have not accomplished it, then, **you** will not have stated His message.* **(5:67)**

It appears from the general context that what is meant here is that the Messenger would confront the people of the Scriptures with what they truly were. He would, thus, be telling them that they had no faith and indeed had nothing to stand on until they implemented the Torah and the Gospel and what had been revealed to them by their Lord. As such, their claims that they followed Scriptures and that they had a faith were false. *Say: O People of the Book! You are not based on anything until you adhere to the Torah and the Gospel and what was caused to descend to you from your Lord.* **(5:68)**

God was certainly aware that to confront them with this decisive

truth would make many of them grow in their arrogance and disbelief. That, however, did not prevent the Messenger from making such a confrontation, feeling no sorrow at their increased arrogance and deviation. It was divine wisdom that he should proclaim the word of the truth, and allow it to produce its effect on people's hearts. This would provide anyone who follows right guidance with the truth. *And, certainly, many of them increase by what was caused to descend to you from your Lord in defiance and ingratitude. So grieve not for folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* **(5:68)**

### THE TRUTH VERSUS PEOPLE'S FANCIES

This first part of the present passage concludes with a clear statement of the faith which God accepts from people, regardless of what they were called before the message of the last Messenger. It was the faith which united people of all creeds and doctrines in ancient history. *Truly, those who believed, those who became Jews and Sabeans and Christians—whoever believed in God and the Last Day and did as one in accord with morality, then, there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)**

This sign states that whatever their creed was, those who believe in God and the Last Day and do what is right — and it is implicitly understood here and explicitly elsewhere in the Quran that they have done that in accordance with the final Messenger's message — will attain salvation: *there will be neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)** They need not worry about what they used to do or under what title they were classified. The most important title is the last one.

All people, regardless of their religion, creed, belief, race, and nationality, are called upon to believe in his message as he preached it in essence and detail. Anyone who does not believe in him as a Messenger and does not believe in the totality and the details of his message remains in error. God does not accept from him the religion he followed prior to the revelation of the Quranic message. Nor is he included among those described by God as people who *will have neither fear in them nor will they feel remorse.* **(5:69)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## Example of How Quranic Critical Thinking Works

Analyze the following paragraph and determine:

1. What is the **Purpose** of the thoughts in this paragraph?
2. What is the **Question(s)**?
3. What **Information** are you given?
4. Based on your question, how would you **Interpret** the information?
5. What is(are) the **Concept(s)**?
6. What is (are) the **Assumption(s)**?
7. What is (are) the **Implication(s)**?
8. What is its **Point of View**?

The Quran guides to what is what is honest, honorable, worthy, moral, conscientious, good, virtuous. What does the Quran give to those who are guided? Good tidings to the ones who believe and who act in accord with morality. It is those who believe and who are moral people who will have a great compensation. Following God's guidance is to act morally. Acting in accord with morality results in a great compensation from God. Human beings have been created with a moral compass.

## Questions to Ask the Students•

What do the different signs say?
Are the two consistent or contradictory?
Why do you say so?
What behavior would have been consistent with their words?
What words would have been consistent with their behavior?
Do 4:34 and 2:231 contradict each other?
When arguing opposing views, you should find points of agreement and specify points of dispute or contradiction.

## Questions to Ask the Students•

What does each sign (4:23 and 2:231) say? Could both views be true?
Why or why not? If one is true, must the other be false?
Where, exactly, do these views contradict each other?
On what do they agreer?
What is it about that view that you think is false?
Do you accept this claim? That one?
On what question does your disagreement turn?
What, exactly, is it in this view that you doubt or disagree with?
The class can explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explore possible ways to reconcile apparent contradictions.
Could someone hold both of these views?
How might someone argue that someone can believe both?

## LESSON 112(10). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Quranic critical thinkers try to treat things that are similar in a similar way and things that are different in a different way. Uncritical thinkers tend not to see the significant similarities and differences. It often is the case that things that appear to be superficially similar are often significantly different and things that appear to be superficially different are often essentially the same. It takes practice to be able to distinguish between the two. As this sensitivity develops, it influences how we experience, how we describe, how we categorize, and how we reason about things. We become more careful and discriminating in our use of words and phrases.

Quranic signs often call on us to compare and contrast two or more things—objects, ideas, phenomena, etc. To merely list similarities and differences has little value in itself. Rather than making such lists, these activities should be proposed in a context which narrows the range of pertinent comparisons and requires some use be made of them in pursuit of some specific goal. For example, if comparing and contrasting two social practices (marriage and divorce), we should use our understanding to illuminate the relationship between them. Thus, only those points which shed light on the particular problem need be mentioned, and each point has implications to be drawn out and integrated into a broader picture.

Here are the two examples of different translations of two Quranic signs we studied in the previous lesson in regard to contradictions. Now we look at them in terms fo similarities and differences to compare and discuss in relationship to the Quranic views on marriage and divorce:

*Men are upholders and maintainers of women by virtue of that in which God has favored some of them above others and by virtue of their spending from their wealth. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in (their husband's) absence what God has guarded. As for those from whom you fear discord and animosity, admonish them, then leave them in their beds, then strike them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them. Truly God is Exalted, Great.* (4:34, *The Study Quran*)

*Men are supporters of wives because God gave some of them an advantage over others and because they spent of their wealth. So the females, ones in accord with morality, are the females,ones who are morally obligated and the females, ones who guard the unseen of what God kept safe. And those females whose resistance you fear, then admonish them (f) and abandon them (f) in their sleeping places and go away from them (f). Then if they (f) obeyed you, then look not for any way against them (f). Truly, God had been Lofty, Great.* (4:34, *The Sublime Quran*)

*When you have divorced women and they have fulfilled their term, keep them honorably or release them honorably, and do not keep them so as to cause harm and thus transgress. Whosoever does that surely wrongs himself. And do not take God's sings in mockery, and remember God's Blessing upon you, and what He sent down to you of the Book and Wisdom, exhorting you thereby. And reverence God, and know that God is Knower of all things.* (2:231, *The Study Quran*)

*When you divorced wives, and they (f) reached their (f) term, then, hold them (f) back as one who is honorable or set them (f) free as one who is honorable. But hold them (f) not back by injuring them so that you commit aggression. And whoever commits that, then, surely, he did wrong himself. And take not to yourselves the signs of God in mockery. Remember the divine blessing of God on you, and what He caused to descend to you from the Book and wisdom. He admonishes you with it. Be conscious of God and know that God is Knowing of everything.* (2:231, *The Sublime Quran*)

The Quran warns those who do not accept the message from Prophet Muhammad. They are similar in that God created both from a *sperm-drop, a clot,* but unlike the blessed Prophet, they walk *arrogantly* upon the earth and they do not believe that the One who created them and shaped them has Power to give life to the dead.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:78-5:86

**Madinah:** *Those who were ungrateful*
*were cursed among the Children of Jacob by the tongue of David*
*and that of Jesus son of Mary.*
*That was because they would rebel*
*and they had been exceeding the limits.* (5:78)
*They had not been forbidding one another*
*from that which is unlawful that they committed.*
*Miserable was what they had been committing!* (5:79)
*You have seen many of them turning away*
*to those who were ungrateful.*
*Miserable was what was put forward for them themselves*
*so that God was displeased with them*
*and in their punishment they are*
*ones who will dwell in it forever.* (5:80)
*If they had been believing in God and the Prophet*
*and what was caused to descend to him,*

*they would not have taken them to themselves protectors,*
*but many of them are ones who disobey.* (5:81)
*Truly, **you** will find the hardest of humanity in enmity*
*to those who believed are the Jews*
*and those who have ascribed partners with God.*
*And, certainly, **you** will find the nearest of them in affection*
*to those who believed are those who said:*
*We are Christians. That is because among them are priests*
*and monks and they grow not arrogant.* (5:82)
*And when they heard what was caused to descend*
*to the Messenger, **you** have seen their eyes overflow with tears*
*because they recognized The Truth.*
*They say: Our Lord! We believed so write us down*
*with the ones who bear witness.* (5:83)
*And why believe we not in God*
*and in what drew near us of The Truth?*
*And we are desirous that Our Lord would cause us to enter*
*the Garden among the folk—*
*the ones in accord with morality.* (5:84)
*Then, God repaid them for what they said—*
*Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in them forever.*
*And that is the recompense*
*of the ones who are doers of good.* (5:85)
*But those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs,*
*those will be the Companions of Hellfire.* (5:86)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHEN WRONGDOING IS CONDONED

These signs make a definitive statement of the Jewish Messengers' attitude towards the ungratefuls from among the Children of Jacob. It is represented by the attitude of the Messengers David and Jesus. Both of them cursed the ungratefuls among the Children of Jacob and their prayers were answered because of the aggression of those ungratefuls, the spread of immorality among them, their turning a blind eye to the spread of evil among themselves, and their patronizing of other ungratefuls. The outcome of all this was that they incurred God's displeasure and were cursed. Their punishment will be everlasting. **(5:78-5:81)**

The ungratefuls among the Children of Jacob were the ones who distorted their revealed Scriptures and refused to abide by the rulings of the divine Code, as we are told in several Quranic Chapters. They violated their covenant with God in which they pledged themselves

to support and follow every messenger He sent: *That was because they would rebel and they had been exceeding the limits.* **(5:78)**

Jewish history is full of examples of such rebellion and aggression. These were not mere individual actions in the Jewish community. Indeed, they were so frequent they became characteristic of the whole community, and even those who did not perpetrate such crimes either turned a blind eye to them or did not speak out against them: *They had not been forbidding one another from that which is unlawful that they committed. Miserable was what they had been committing!* **(5:79)**

It should be explained that this is not a negative attitude to wrong, as may be thought. The fact that the Messenger describes it as "changing" what is wrong suggests that it is a positive action. To object to what is wrong, even in one's thoughts, means maintaining a positive attitude towards that wrong. It suggests that the person concerned rejects that wrong and tries to eradicate it and replace it with what is right at the first opportunity. A Muslim is required to maintain at least the weakest degree of faith which is to object to wrong in private. To submit to wrong, on the other hand, simply because it can exert enormous pressure, is to abandon even the weakest degree of faith. In such a situation, the same curse that has been incurred by the Children of Jacob applies.

*Those who were ungrateful were cursed among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and that of Jesus son of Mary. That was because they would rebel and they had been exceeding the limits. They had not been forbidding one another from that which is unlawful that they committed. Miserable was what they had been committing!* **(5:78-5:79)**

### AN ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENT OF FAITH

The real reason for this attitude of the Jews, despite their having received revelations from God, is that they do not really believe in God and His Messenger. They have not embraced God's final message. Therefore, they are ungratefuls. Had they believed, they would not have allied themselves to ungratefuls: **(5:80-5:81)**

As for the other people of earlier revelations, they ally themselves with materialist atheism whenever they have to deal with Muslims. They even cooperate with people of pagan and idolatrous religions when they have to fight Muslims, even though those Muslims do not represent the Quranic message in any way, except through being descendants of past Muslim generations. All this goes to show how deeply rooted is the grudge against this faith and those who belong to it, though their claims of belonging to it may be false.

God indeed tells the truth. He says: *You have seen many of them turning away to those who were ungrateful. Miserable was what was put forward for them themselves so that God was displeased with them and in their punishment they are ones who will dwell in it forever.* **(5:80)** This is the net result of what they have done for themselves. Evil indeed is such an outcome. Bitter indeed are the fruits they reap from allying themselves with ungratefuls.

Who of us reads or listens to God's description of those people and still takes decisions that cannot be sanctioned by God, concerning alliances and mutual support between the followers of this religion and its enemies who are allied with ungratefuls? What motive could there be for those people to seek an alliance with ungratefuls, unless it is lack of faith in God and His Messenger: *If they had been believing in God and the Prophet and what was caused to descend to him, they would not have taken them to themselves protectors, but many of them are ones who disobey.* **(5:81)** This is indeed the reason they do not believe in God and the Messenger, and the majority of them are evildoers. They share the same feelings and directions with ungratefuls. Therefore, they prefer to be allied with them rather than with those who believe in God and His Messenger.

This Quranic comment highlights three important facts. Firstly, that all the people of the Scriptures, with the exception of a few who believe in Muhammad, God's Messenger , do not believe in God because they do not believe in His last Messenger. The Quran does not describe them as people who do not believe in the Messenger only, but describes them as non-believers in God as well: *If they had been believing in God and the Prophet and what was caused to descend to him, they would not have taken them to themselves protectors, but many of them are ones who disobey.* **(5:81)** This is a clear statement from God which does not admit any ambiguity or differing interpretation. No matter how strongly they claim that they believe in God, they are ungratefuls, particularly when we take into consideration their deviant concepts of God as these have been outlined in this and other Chapters.

Secondly, all the people of earlier revelations are required to embrace the divine faith, as they have been called upon to do so by the Messenger Muhammad . If they respond, then they are believers and they follow a divine faith. If they reject this call, God's description of them remains true.

Thirdly, there can be no bond of alliance or mutual support between them and Muslims in any matter, because all matters are, according to the Quranic message subject to faith.

This short passage **(5:82-5:86)** complements the discussion which has already taken place in this Chapter about the attitudes of the Jews, the Christians and those who associate partners with God

towards His Messenger and the Muslim community.

### WHO HATES THE BELIEVERS MOST?

The divine directives included in the Quran continue to be operative. The advocates of the Quranic message today and tomorrow will do well if they listen to these directives and statements as if they are addressed to them now in order to determine on their basis their attitudes towards all groups of people and towards different beliefs and creeds, situations and systems, values and standards.

*Truly, you will find the hardest of humanity in enmity to those who believed are the Jews and those who have ascribed partners with God. And, certainly, you will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believed are those who said: We are Christians. That is because among them are priests and monks and they grow not arrogant.* **(5:82)** The way this statement is phrased makes it addressed either to the Messenger or to all believers because it states something that can be recognized by everyone. Arabic style admits both possibilities. In either case, it provides the same meaning. What is noteworthy about the phrasing of this statement is the fact that the Jews are mentioned ahead of the idolaters in being most hostile to the believers, and that their hostility is open and easily recognized by anyone who cares to pay attention.

### AN ATTITUDE BRINGING RICH REWARDS

And you will certainly find that the nearest of them in affection to the believers are those who say, We are Christians.' This is so because there are priests and monks among them and because they are not given to arrogance. **(5:82)** This sign and the four signs that follow it describe a certain condition and make a judgement concerning it. The description applies to a group of the followers of Jesus who describe themselves as Christians, and it states that these are the nearest of all people in their affection to the believers.

Although these signs leave us in no doubt that they describe a particular case to which the whole statement applies, many are those who are mistaken in their understanding of it. Their mistake causes a serious error in determining the Muslims' attitude towards other camps. Therefore, it is important to carefully study these signs and understand the particular case to which they apply.

That particular case applied to a certain group of Christians. They were closest in their affection to the believers, *And, certainly, you will find the nearest of them in affection to those who believed are those who said: We are Christians. That is because among them are priests and monks and they grow not arrogant.* **(5:82)** Among

them were people who were fully aware of the true Christian faith, and were prepared to acknowledge the truth whenever they realized it.

The Quran clarifies the fact that this description does not apply to all those who claim to be Christians. It provides more details of the attitude of this particular group: **(5:83-5:84)**

This is a very vivid description of this group. They are so deeply touched when they listen to the Quran that tears spring to their eyes in recognition of the truth they hear. In the first instance, they cannot express this recognition in any way better than allowing their eyes to overflow with tears. No words are adequate to describe their feelings. Such a response, indicative of profound effect, is a well-known human reaction.

Tearful eyes, however, are not enough. They do not wish to adopt a negative attitude to the truth they have recognized as a result of listening to the Quran and its evident authoritativeness. They take a clear, positive attitude which accepts this truth, believes in it and submits to its authority. They declare their acceptance in a profound and frank manner, saying: **(5:83-5:84)**

Firstly, they declare to their Lord that they believe in this truth they have recognized and pray to Him in His glory to include them among those who bear witness to this truth and with the community that seeks to implement it. That is the community of Muslims, which gives credence to its belief in this truth both by verbal declaration and by action to establish it in human life. Those new witnesses thus join the Muslim community that submits to the truth and they pray to God to witness their belief. Furthermore, they cannot accept that any obstacle should impede them from believing in God or submitting to the truth as they listen to it. After all, they hope that as a result of their acceptance of the faith, their Lord will be pleased with them, assign to them a higher rank and include them among the righteous: *And why believe we not in God and in what drew near us of The Truth? And we are desirous that Our Lord would cause us to enter the Garden among the folk—the ones in accord with morality.* **(5:84)**

### ON RECOGNIZING THE TRUTH OF THE QURANIC MESSAGE

Having described their frank, positive attitude towards the truth revealed to God's Messenger and their declaration of their acceptance of the Quranic message and their willingness to bear witness to it by sacrificing their wealth and lives for its cause, praying all the time that God may accept them as witnesses and admit them among the righteous, the Chapter describes their destiny: *God repaid them for what they said—Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will*

*dwell in them forever. And that is the recompense of the ones who are doers of good.* **(5:85)**

The Chapter has given us a very clear description of this group of people who are "nearest in affection to the believers", giving prominence to the fact that they are far from arrogant and that they respond to the truth once they recognize it. Moreover, they are honest, serious and willing to fulfil the requirements of faith. But the Chapter does not stop at that in identifying this group. It goes on to distinguish them from the rest of those who say, "We are Christians". This latter group listen to the truth, but they deny it, turn away from it and have no interest in bearing witness to its truthfulness. Indeed, they claim it to be false: *But those who are ungrateful and denied Our signs, those will be the Companions of Hellfire.* **(5:86)**
who do good, while the other will end up in Hell.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

### QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What does this remind you of? Why?
How are the translations similar? Different?
How important are the differences? Why?
What does this tell us about our topic? How useful is that comparison?
Can anyone think of an even more useful comparison?

### QUESTIONS TO ASK THE STUDENTS•

What conclusions am I coming to?
Is my inference logical?
Are there other conclusions I should consider?
Does this interpretation make sense?
Does our solution necessarily follow from the facts?
How did you reach that conclusion?
What are you basing your reasoning on?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. :

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.

I was able to formulate test questions.

I wrote out answers to my own questions.

## Lesson 112(11). Critical Thinking Strategy Utilizing Concepts, Definitions, Principles, Vocabulary

### What is a concept?

What is a concept? A concept is an idea or thought, especially a generalized idea of a thing or of a class of things. The Quranic text expresses clusters of concepts or ideas. It is these concepts that it uses that students need to learn to identify, contrast them with other of its concepts and clarify what they mean and what students include and exclude because of them. Quranic clusters of concepts include, for example, types of people: believer-disbelievers-ungrateful-hypocrites, living-creation; false-deity concept; sacred text concept. The latter, sacred text concept includes four concepts: The Quran itself, the Gospel, the Torah (the first five books of the Bible also known as the Pentateuch revealed to Moses), and the Psalms.

## Quranic Chapter 5: The Table Spread with Food (al-Maidah)

### Signs 5:87-5:93

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Forbid not what is good that God permitted to you*
*and exceed not the limits.*
*Truly, God loves not the ones who exceed the limits.* (5:87)
*And eat of what God provided you, the lawful, what is good.*
*And be conscious of God*
*in Whom you are ones who believe.* (5:88)
*God will not take you to task for what is idle talk in your oaths,*
*but He will take you to task for oaths you made as an agreement.*
*Then, its expiation is the feeding of ten needy people*
*of the average of what you feed your own people*
*or clothing them or letting go of a bondsperson.*
*But whoever finds not the means,*
*then, formal fasting for three days.*
*That is the expiation for your oaths when you swore them.*
*And keep your oaths safe.*
*Thus, God makes manifest His signs to you*
*so that perhaps you will give thanks.* (5:89)
*O those who believed! Truly, intoxicants and gambling*
*and fetishes and divining arrows are of the disgraceful actions*
*of Satan. Then, avoid them so that perhaps you will prosper.* (5:90)
*But Satan only wants that he precipitate*
*enmity and hatred between you through intoxicants and gambling*
*and bar you from the remembrance of God*
*and from formal prayer.*

*Then, will you be ones who desist?* (5:91)
*And obey God and obey the Messenger and beware.*
*Then, truly, if you turned away, then, know*
*that only on Our Messenger*
*is the delivering of Our clear message.* (5:92)
*There is not for those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*blame for what they tasted*
*when they were God-conscious and believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*and, again, they were God-conscious and believed.*
*And, again, they were God-conscious and did good.*
*And God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (5:93)

## COMMENTARY°

### PROHIBITING WHAT IS LAWFUL

The first address in this passage to the believers reminds them that they may not exercise any of God's attributes, since these belong totally to God. As such, they may not forbid themselves any of the wholesome and good things that God has made lawful to them. It is not open to them to make a demonstration of self-imposed prohibition, refusing to eat of such good food God has given them. They must remember that it is God who has provided them with such lawful and wholesome sustenance. It is only He who may designate things as permissible or forbidden: **(5:87-5:88)**

### ATONEMENT FOR BREAKING AN OATH

The sign that follows, which refers to oaths and their atonement, appears to have been revealed in order to deal with such cases when people make an oath in order to solemnize their abstention from something permissible, as was done by those Companions of the Messenger. The Quran also makes it clear that it is not up to human beings to declare things forbidden or permissible. That authority belongs to God, in whom those Companions of the Messenger believed. This Quranic sign also deals with all vows of abstention from doing something good or vows to undertake something evil. Whenever it is clear to a person who has made an oath that breaking it is better and more conducive to earning God's pleasure, he should break it and atone for it in one of the methods defined by this Quranic sign.

An oath made solemnly and deliberately requires an atonement if it is to be broken. The atonement is given in detail in this Quranic sign: **(5:89)** The Arabic term which is used to describe the type of food which should be offered to the ten needy persons means literally

either "the average" or "the best" food a person gives to his own family. However, we can combine both aspects of the meaning because the average is normally preferred in the Quranic message. It also applies to clothing the ten needy persons which means giving them some of the average type of clothes one gives to one's family.

An alternative is to free a person from slavery, but it is not specified here whether that slave should be a believer. Therefore, scholars have different views concerning this point, but we will not discuss the details of these views. *But whoever finds not the means, then, formal fasting for three days.* **(5:89)** It is only when a person is unable to meet the requirements of any of the above types of atonement that he may atone for his broken oath by fasting. Again, scholars have varying views with regard to whether these three days must be consecutive or not. Our own approach in this commentary is not to discuss such varying views or to evaluate them. Anyone who wishes to study them may do so by referring to books of fiqh which discuss them in detail. All views of scholars are in agreement on the essential purpose of the atonement, namely, attaching proper value to the breached contract and giving proper respect to oaths which are pledges or forms of contracts which God has ordered to be honored. Therefore, if anyone of us makes an oath and finds out subsequently that it is better, from the Quranic point of view, to do otherwise, he both breaks his oath and atones for it. The same applies if he makes an oath which he has no authority to make, such as an oath of prohibition or permissibility of a particular thing. In this case, he breaks the oath and atones for it.

### A CATEGORICAL PROHIBITION OF INTOXICANTS

It is within the context of legislation, permissibility and prohibition, as well as the molding of the Muslim community in Madinah, purging it from all remaining traces of past tradition of the dark days, that a clear and decisive verdict is given on intoxicating drinks and gambling, coupled with practices of associating partners with God. **(5:90-5:91)**

Drinking, gambling, idols and divining arrows were important aspects of pre- the Quranic Arabia. They were closely related in both practice and tradition. The Arabs used to drink to the point of extravagance. They considered that drinking afforded people distinction. They often mention drinking in their poetry as a practice to be proud of or to praise others with. In social gatherings, drinking was coupled with the slaughter of animals which were immediately cooked to provide food to those who took part in these drinking bouts, those who served wine and those who frequented such gatherings. The animals

were slaughtered at the feet of idols which were sprayed with the blood of their sacrifice. In such social events, the act of divining arrows was practised in order to determine the sharing out of the sacrificial meat. Everyone's share was determined by his arrow, with the highest arrow giving the largest share, and the lowest giving no share whatsoever, even though it might have been the arrow of the person who provided the animal for slaughter. This gives us an idea of how traditions were intertwined with ignorant ideological concepts.

### OBEDIENCE: A MAIN CHARACTERISTIC OF MUSLIM SOCIETY

This address awakens the hearts of believers on the one hand and reminds them, on the other, of the basic requirement of faith, namely, obedience and submission.

This is followed by a decisive statement on the nature of those practices which admit no counter argument: **(5:90)** These are, then, foul practices and cannot be included among good and wholesome things which God has permitted. Moreover, they have been devised by Satan, man's old enemy. It is sufficient for a believer to know that something is devised by Satan to make it totally repugnant to him.

At this point, the prohibition is issued, but is combined with the prospect of attaining success, which itself has its profound effect on the human mind: **(5:91)** Satan's aim and the purpose of his scheming are thus exposed before every Muslim. Satan seeks nothing except the stirring up of enmity and hatred among believers so as to turn them away from their worship. What a wicked scheme!

Satan's aims can easily be recognized in our practical life after we have accepted them as true, since God has stated them so. It does not take anyone with an open mind long to recognize how Satan actually stirs up enmity and hatred, utilising for this purpose intoxicants and gambling. Intoxicants weaken one's consciousness and self-control, heighten tempers and stir up whims and impulses. Gambling and all games of chance leave people with a sense of loss and grudges. It is natural that a losing gambler nurses a strong grudge against the winner who takes away his money from under his nose and leaves him empty handed. It is only natural that such matters stir up enmity and hatred, regardless of the impression of happiness they initially give off.

The fact that intoxicants and gambling do turn people away from their remembrance of God and from prayer is too clear to require elaboration. Drinking makes people forget and gambling makes them oblivious to everything else. Indeed, games of chance keep gamblers in a state of intoxication which is not dissimilar to that produced by

drink. The world of a gambler is akin to that of a drunk: tables, glasses and a strike of fortune or misfortune. The Chapter goes on to put the whole matter in its proper perspective: *And obey God and obey the Messenger and beware.* **(5:92)**

This is the basic rule to which all matters are referred: obedience to God and His Messenger, i.e. submission which leaves no room except for absolute obedience and total compliance. There is also an implicit warning in this statement: *Then, truly, if you turned away, then, know that only on Our Messenger is the delivering of Our clear message.* **(5:92)** He has certainly conveyed God's message with absolute clarity. Anyone who disobeys bears full responsibility for his disobedience. This warning, implicitly as it is expressed, is indeed very strong. The believers are made aware that should they slip into disobedience they only harm themselves. God's Messenger has fulfilled his trust and conveyed his message. Therefore, he is no longer responsible for them. Nor will he shield them from punishment, since they have disobeyed him. Their faith is in the hands of God, who is able to punish those who disobey. Thus does the Quranic method open up our hearts and penetrate our depths.

### SELF-SURRENDER AND OBEDIENCE

When these signs were revealed totally prohibiting all intoxicants, and describing them as an abomination devised by Satan, two groups of people raised a query in the same wording but for totally different reasons. A few of the Messenger's Companions who were very scrupulous said: "What about our Companions who died when intoxicants were still lawful to drink?" Some of them said: "What about those killed in the Battle of Uhud, with intoxicants in their bellies?" i.e. before they were forbidden to drink. Another group who were keen to seize every chance to sow the seeds of doubt among the Muslim community said similar things. Their aim was to try to weaken the Muslims' trust in the reasoning behind the Quranic legislation. They also wanted to convey the feeling that those who died before the prohibition of intoxicants were totally lost, since they died with this abomination in their bodies. Therefore, the purpose behind the following sign: **(5:93)**

This sign states that what has not been forbidden is lawful and that prohibition begins with its statement, not at any moment prior to this.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based

on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### DRAW A CONCEPT MAP

Alternatives to outlining are concept-mapping.

**HOW DO I MAP?**

First reject the idea of an outline, or of paragraphs using sentences.

Think in terms of key words or symbols that represent ideas and words:

**CONCEPT MAPPING:**

This is a type of brainstorming where you place the title/subject as the main idea, then develop a "mind map" around it. It can be effective either in a group or by yourself:

**PRE-QUESTIONS:**

Often chapters in texts provide organizing questions.
You can also write out a series of questions you expect to be answered when reading: Examples:

**DEFINITION:**

What is....?
Where does ... fit?
What group does ... belong to?

**CHARACTERISTICS:**

How would I describe...?
What does ... look like?
What are its parts?

### VISUAL AIDS

Pictures and other visual material can activate your prior knowledge. Use the Internet to search for pictures related to your title/topic to give you visual images of what you are about to read.

How would your rate yourself? Can you give examples for the following:

**EXAMPLES**

What is a good example of ...?
What are similar examples that share attributes but differ in some way?

**EXPERIENCE**

What experience have I had with ....?
What can I imagine about ...?

## LESSON 112(12). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

In comparing analogous situations and transferring insights to new contexts, the example of the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah comes to mind.

> The Arabs had been practicing the pilgrimage for centuries. While the pilgrimage had been originally established by Abraham and his son, Ishmael for the worship of the One God, over time, the beliefs changed. People would still perform the pilgrimage to Makkah and the Kabah, but now the Kabah was filled with idols whom they worshipped. It became their custom to circumambulate the Kabah naked.
>
> The life of the Prophet, so important in Islam, consist of the words which he spoke, the laws he brought, the deeds he performed, things he remained silent about or did not disagree with and deeds he actually performed in his lifetime without telling others that they should themselves perform them. The Traditions of the Prophet, then, are his words and his conduct. These become the rules of Islam which are divided into two groups: first, those which existed before Islam but were confirmed by the Prophet (signed rules); second, those which had not existed previously but were established by Islam (created rules). Besides these signed and created rules and the words and deeds of the Prophet, a third principle can also be perceived. It is my belief that it is the most sensitive. It is the method that the Prophet used.
>
> The Prophet preserved the form, the container of a custom which had deep roots in society, one which people had gotten used to from generation to generation and one which was practiced in a natural manner, but he changed the contents, the spirit, the direction and the practical application of customs in a revolutionary, decisive and immediate manner.
>
> He was inspired by a particular method which he uses in social combat. Without producing negative results, without containing any of the weak points of the other methods, his method contained the positive characteristics of the others. Through the customs of society which apply the brakes, he quickly attained his social goals. His revolutionary method was this: he maintained the container of a social tradition but inwardly changed the contents.
>
> Before Islam, there was a custom of total ablution that was both a belief and a superstition. The pre-Islamic Arabs believed that when a person had sexual intercourse, he or she incarnated jinn (spirits

which inhabit the earth), thereby rendering both body and soul unclean. Until he or she found water and performed a total ablution, the jinn could not be exorcised.

Another example is the pilgrimage to Makkah. Before Islam, it was an Arab custom, full of superstitious ancestor worship. It was a glorified type of idol worship, holding economic advantage for the Quraysh tribe whereby the Kabah was filled with idols that were worshiped by the people. It had gradually come to assume this form from the time of Abraham. The Prophet was commanded to keep the form of the pre-Islamic custom of pilgrimage, as Abraham, the Friend of God, had built the Kabah for the worship of the One God, but through God's guidance, he changed the content. Now the pilgrimage was practiced to worship the One God.

The basis of the pilgrimage had been twofold: To protect the economic interests of the Quraysh merchants in Makkah and to create an artificial need among the Arab tribes for the Quraysh nobility. It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take this form and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The Prophet, with his revolutionary stand, took the pilgrimage of the idol-worshipping tribes and changed it into a completely opposite rite. It was a revolutionary leap. As a result, while the Quraysh leaders opposed him because of their concern that they would lose their means of income, the Arab people underwent no anguish, no loss of values or beliefs, but rather, revived the truth and cleansed an ancient custom. They moved easily from idol worship to unity. Suddenly, they had left the past. Their society was not aware that the foundations of idol worship had been torn down. This leap, this revolutionary social method found within the (*Quranic Sunnah*) of the Prophet preserved the outer form, but changed its content. It maintained the container as a permanent element but changed and transformed the content. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.

A clear-visioned intellectual, confronted by outdated customs, ancient traditions, a dead culture and a stagnant religious and social order, takes up the mandate of the Prophet rather than submit to prejudices from the past. By this method one can reach revolutionary goals without the danger of revolution, on one hand, and without opposing the basis of faith and ancient social values on the other. By doing so, one does not remove oneself from people, nor does one become a stranger on whom people may turn and condemn. This method works because the Prophet received knowledge from the di-

vine Infinite, because he asked for the help of revelation and because he made use of what he received.

It was revealed to the Prophet of Islam to take the form of the pilgrimage and change it into a most beautiful and deep rite founded upon the unity of God and the oneness of humanity.

The conservative, at whatever cost, tries, to the last bit of his strength, to keep his customs—even if it means sacrificing himself and others. The revolutionary, on the other hand, wants to change everything into another form all at once. He wants to annihilate everything, to suddenly jump— whether or not society is prepared to leap in that direction. When the conservative senses the possibility of revolution, he turns to anger, dictatorship, and extensive public murders not only against his enemies but also against the people themselves. A reformer, on the other hand, always gives a corrupter the opportunity to destroy. The Prophet, through the inspired method of his work, showed us that if we understand and can put his method into action, we can behave in a most enlightened and correct way.[1]

The power of a Quranic concept is not limited by the ability you have to use it. Quranic thinkers make use of concepts in order to better their skills in understanding the Quran. It is through practice that they use these concepts by applying them to new situations, that is, by putting the concepts into practice.

Quranic thinkers focus on the basic Quranic concepts. You are encouraged to be able to reframe Quranic concepts, taking the Quranic form and changing the contents in modeling what Prophet Muhammad did.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:94-5:100

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Certainly, God will try you with something*
*of the game that your hands and your lances attain*
*so that God knows who fears Him in the unseen.*
*Then, whoever exceeded the limits after that,*
*for him is a painful punishment.* (5:94)
*O those who believed! Kill not game*
*when you are in pilgrim sanctity.*
*And whoever of you killed as one who is willful,*
*then, the recompense is like what he killed of flocks*
*by two possessors of justice who give judgment.*
*Among you will be a sacrificial gift—*

*that which reaches the Kabah—*
*or the expiation of food for the needy or the equivalent of that*
*in formal fasting so that he, certainly, experiences*
*the mischief of his conduct.*
*God pardoned what is past.*
*And whoever reverted to it, then, God will requite him.*
*And God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (5:95)
*The game of the sea was permitted to you*
*and the food of it as sustenance for you*
*and for a company of travelers,*
*but the game of dry land was forbidden to you*
*as long as you continued in pilgrim sanctity.*
*And be conscious of God*
*to Whom you will be assembled.* (5:96)
*God made the Kabah the Sacred House,*
*maintaining it for humanity and the Sacred Month*
*and the sacrificial gift and the garlanded.*
*That is so that you will know that God knows*
*whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth*
*and that God is Knowing of everything.* (5:97)
*Know that God is Severe in repaymen*
*and that God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (5:9
*What is with the Messenger is not b*
*the delivering of the message.*
*And God knows whatever you show*
*and whatever you keep back.* (5:99)
*Say: Not on the same level are the bad*
*and what is good even if the prevalence*
*of the bad impressed you.*
*So be God-conscious,*
*O those imbued with intuition,*
*so that perhaps you will prosper.* (5:100)

## COMMENTARY°

### CONSECRATION AND GAME KILLING

The Chapter continues to elaborate on further prohibitions, speaking about game when one is in the state of consecration, or ihram, and what compensates for its killing. It further speaks of the purpose of the sanctity of the House of Worship in Makkah, the sacred months, dedicated and garlanded cattle which must not be touched as the Chapter makes clear in its opening signs. This part concludes with the establishment of a clear standard of values for Muslim individuals and Muslim society. According to this standard,

a small amount of good is far more valuable than evil, plentiful as it may be. **(5:94-5:99)**

### THE PURPOSE OF THE TRIAL

*Then, whoever exceeded the limits after that, for him is a painful punishment.* **(5:94)** People are thus told of the trial to which he is being put. He is informed of its purpose and warned against yielding to temptation. All means of success have been given to him. Therefore, should he transgress after all this, it is only fair that he should be made to endure grievous suffering. This is his own choice.

Details of the atonement for violation are then given. This starts with a firm prohibition and ends with a second warning: **(5:95)**

The prohibition applies to killing game deliberately when a person is in the state of consecration, or ihram. If a game animal is killed by accident, the person in consecration neither incurs a sin nor has to give any compensation. For deliberate killing, the compensation is an offering of cattle or other animals equivalent to the game he has killed. Thus, if a person in consecration kills a deer, the compensation may be an offering of a sheep or a goat; for a camel, a cow or an ox is appropriate; for an ostrich or a giraffe or a similarly large animal, a camel may be offered; for a rabbit or a cat the offering may be a rabbit. What has no equivalent among animals however, an offering of its cash value is acceptable in compensation.

All this applies to hunting on land. Fishing, on the other hand, is permissible in all situations: "Lawful to you is all water game, and whatever food the sea brings forth, as a provision for you and for travellers." (5:96) This means that all types of water animals are permissible to catch and use for food whether a person is in the state of consecration or not. With this mention of the permissibility of water-game and food from the sea, the sign restates the prohibition of killing game on land during consecration: *The game of the sea was permitted to you and the food of it as sustenance for you and for a company of travelers, but the game of dry land was forbidden to you as long as you continued in pilgrim sanctity.* **(5:96)**

These rules of permissibility and prohibition are concluded with a statement that appeals to the believers' sense of fearing God and reminds us of the Day of Judgement and the reckoning We will then have to face: *And be conscious of God to Whom you will be assembled.* **(5:96)**

### THE REASON FOR PROHIBITION

It is perhaps pertinent to ask here about the purpose behind these prohibition rules. Well, God wishes to provide a security zone for

humanity, where they seek refuge from life's worries. This zone is represented by the Kabah, the Inviolable House of Worship, and the sacred months. They offer a haven of peace in the midst of the raging battle between those in combat through life, regardless of their race and ethnic origin. Their desires, ambitions and needs continue to fuel their struggle, but this security zone beckons to them so that it may substitute reassurance for their worries, love for conflict, brotherhood and security for hostility and fear. What is more is that such concepts are not confined to the realm of theories and ideals; people are given practical training in real life to grab such feelings and maintain them. Thus, they are seen as a reality, not mere words and visions that have no bearing on real life. **(5:97-5:99)**

*That is so that you will know that God knows whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in and on the earth and that God is Knowing of everything.* **(5:97)** This may sound a rather strange comment at this particular juncture, but it is perfectly understandable. God has laid down this faith and established this sanctuary so that people may know that He knows everything that is in the heavens and the earth and that He is fully aware of all things. Thus, they know that God is fully cognizant of human nature, as well as people's aspirations, needs and spiritual longings. He enacts legislation in order to satisfy natures, meet needs, fulfil aspirations and answer longings. When people feel in their hearts how God's compassion is evident in His law and appreciate the harmony between their nature and God's law. they realize that God is fully aware of all that is in the heavens anc the earth and that His perfect knowledge encompasses everything.

The discussion of the permissible and the prohibited, both in consecration and at other times, is brought to its conclusion with a clear warning against incurring punishment, while at the same time offering the prospect of forgiveness and mercy: *Know that God is Severe in repayment and that God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(5:98)** The warning is coupled with pointing out that responsibility lies clearly with the one who breaches sanctities and does not regret or repent: *What is with the Messenger is not but the delivering of the message. And God knows whatever you show and whatever you keep back.* **(5:99)**

### FOUL AND WHOLESOME

At the concluding part of this passage God provides us with a standard so that we may give correct judgement of all things. In these scales, only what is good and wholesome is weighty, while that which is foul and evil carries no weight. This prevents a Muslim from being deceived when he finds that the foul is plentiful and the evil

too numerous. *Say: Not on the same level are the bad and what is good even if the prevalence of the bad impressed you.* **(5:100)**

Evil and good are mentioned here within the context of elaborating which food and game are permissible and which are forbidden. What is forbidden is evil, while everything that is permissible is good. Certainly the good and the evil cannot be equal, even though the evil may come in such plenty that it attracts and tempts people. That which is good provides enjoyment that is not followed by foul consequences, such as regret, waste, pain or disease. The pleasure gained out of evil things cannot be matched even by a modicum of the good things in life. What is more is that with the good things, the human being enjoys safety in this life and in the life to come. When the human mind is free of the shackles of desire as a result of its being God-conscious and when it has attained a keen watchfulness, it will inevitably prefer good to evil. This is bound to end in success and triumph, both in this world and in the Hereafter: *So be conscious of God, O those imbued with intuition, so that perhaps you will prosper.* **(5:100)**

This sign especially suits the present occasion, but it has a much wider implication. It looks to a broad horizon, encompassing life in its totality.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

You will begin to see how important and pervasive social definitions are. You will begin to redefine situations in ways that run contrary to some commonly accepted definitions. You will notice then how redefining situations (and relationships) enables you to get in touch with your emotions. You may then recognize that the way you think (that is, define things) generates the emotions you experience. When you think you are threatened (i.e., define a situation as threatening), you feel fear. If you define a situation as a 'failure', you may feel depressed. On the other hand, if you define that same situation as a 'lesson or opportunity to learn' you feel empowered to learn. When you recognize this control that you are capable of exercising, the two strategies begin to work together and reinforce each other.

How would your rate yourself? Do you agree with the following statements?

### WHAT IS TOO LITTLE COURAGE?

Cowardice or weakness is an obstacle to courage. It is wrong to show weakness in face of difficulties, to lose heart, to be weak in will, to be weary and faint-hearted, to despair or boast, to be impatient and fretful. It is forbidden to be afraid of men or of Satan and his protectors. It is only Satan who frightens you with his protectors. So fear them not, but fear Me if you had been ones who believe. (3:175)

### WHAT IS TOO MUCH COURAGE?

There are certain obstacles which arise out of misuse of courage, that is, too much courage. Warning is given to those people who oppress people with wrong-doing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice. The way is only against those who do wrong to humanity and are insolent in and on the earth unrightfully. *Those, for them is a painful punishment.* (42:42) *It is forbidden to exhibit fierceness: Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it;* (48:26) to be arrogant against God: *And rise not up against God. Truly, I am one who arrives with a clear authority* (44:19) for arrogance blinds people to the truth; *and they negated them—although their souls confessed to them-out of injustice and self-exaltation. So look on how had been the Ultimate End of the ones who make corruption;* (27:14) to swell one's cheek with pride, or walk in insolence through the earth: *And turn not your cheek away from humanity nor walk through the earth exultantly. Truly, God loves not any proud boaster* (31:18) for one cannot rend the earth asunder or reach the mountains.

## LESSON 112(13). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS

Uncritical thinkers who exhibit selfishness similar to the ungrateful around Prophet Muhammad tended to assume that their own view of things was the only correct way to see the world. They tried to manipulate the views of others to their own advantage.

Fair-minded Quranic thinkers are like our beloved Prophet who followed the way of Prophet Abraham. Prophet Abraham recognized that his own way of thinking and interpreting the world around him required insight and experience through trial and error. He went through a critical analysis of his experience. He questioned the commonly held belief of the people around him. For his part, he explored his own beliefs and his own reasoning and theories. This was essential to his thinking and behavior. Once he experienced this, he was certain of his perspectives and could speak about them with deep insight.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:101-5:108

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Ask not about things that if they are shown to you*
*would raise anger in you.*
*Yet if you ask about them at the time*
*when the Quran is being sent down,*
*they will be shown to you.*
*God pardoned that which is past.*
*And God is Forgiving, Forbearing.* (5:101)
*Surely, the folk asked about them before you.*
*Again, they became ones who are ungrateful for it.* (5:102)
*God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saiba*
*nor Wasilah nor Hami, but those who were ungrateful,*
*they devise lies against God*
*and most of them are not reasonable.* (5:103)
*And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God*
*caused to descend and to the Messenger, they said:*
*Enough is what we found our fathers upon.*
*Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing*
*nor are they truly guided?* (5:104)
*O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls.*
*He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided.*
*To God is the return of you all.*
*Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* (5:105)

*O those who believed! Have testimony between you*
*when death attended anyone of you.*
*At the time of bequeathing, have two possessors of justice*
*from among yourselves or two others from among others*
*if you traveled through the region*
*and the affliction of death lit on you.*
*You will detain them both after the formal prayer.*
*And they will swear by God.*
*If you were in doubt about them, have them say:*
*We will not exchange it for a price*
*even if he had been possessing kinship.*
*And we will not keep back testimony of God.*
*Truly, we, then, would be among*
*the ones who are perverted.* (5:106)
*Then, if it was ascertained that the two merited*
*an accusation of sin, then, two others will stand up*
*in their station from among those who are the most deserving,*
*nearest in kinship,*
*and they both swear an oath by God saying:*
*Our testimony has a better right than the testimony*
*of the other two. And we exceeded not the limits, for,*
*truly, we, then, would be among the ones who are unjust.* (5:107
*That is likelier that they bring testimony in proper form,*
*or they fear that their oaths will be repelled after the others' oaths.*
*So be conscious of God and hear.*
*And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (5:108)

## COMMENTARY°

### POLITENESS IN DEALING WITH THE MESSENGER

The Chapter moves on to draw the attention of the early Muslims to the standard of politeness they must adopt with the Messenger. They are told not to ask him about matters on which he remains silent, particularly such matters which, should they be tackled, may cause hardship or embarrassment to the person raising the question, or may impose on him heavy tasks or restrictions that God, out of His mercy, has chosen not to impose on the Muslims. **(5:101-5:102)**

### CHOOSING THE HARD WAY

God has kept certain matters unknown to man, or He might have expressed certain matters in general terms. It does not harm people to leave such matters in the form God has left them. To question these at the time of the Messenger might have provided them with distressing answers, or might have overburdened both them and future gen-

erations. Therefore, God tells the believers not to ask about certain matters which if revealed might be harmful. He also warns them that should they ask about these during the Messenger's lifetime, when the Quran was being revealed, for then they would have their answers, but these would impose on them obligations that God did not originally make binding: **(5:101)** The sign carries a clear instruction not to inquire about matters which God has left out or stated without details in order to keep duties lighter, as in the case of pilgrimage.

God then gives the example of former communities that were given revelations. Some of them made things harder for themselves by numerous questions about rulings and duties. When, as a result, God made new obligations binding on them, they failed to perform these, thus rejecting them. Had they left matters as God stated them originally, they would have been able to benefit by the easier tasks God wanted to assign to them. They would not have had to cope with their failure to fulfil their responsibilities.

### FREEDOM FOR THE HUMAN MIND

We have already mentioned a report in which Mujahid quotes Ibn Abbas and Said ibn Jubayr's comments on the immediate reason for revealing the sign instructing the believers not to put questions concerning certain matters which would cause them difficulty or distress should they be stated in detail. The same report mentions that their questions included things and practices known in pre- the Quranic days.

We have not been able to determine which particular things and practices were referred to, but the fact that the Chapter mentions the dedication of certain types of cattle immediately after the instruction not to ask unnecessary questions of detail suggests that the two are somehow linked. This is all that we need to say before discussing the sign that refers to such idolatrous practices.

It was not God who instituted [superstitions like those of] a slit-ear she camel, or a she-camel let loose for free pasture, or idol sacrifices for twin-births in animals, or stallion-camels freed from work. It is ungratefuls who attribute their own lying inventions to God. Most of them never use their reason. When they are told: **(5:103-5:104)**

At this point, the Chapter pays attention to one aspect of idolatry in pre-the Quranic , pagan Arabia. It brings it into focus so as to refute all legends surrounding it. It states the basic principles of rational thinking, as well as the principles of law and faith at the same time: *God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saibah nor Wasilah nor*

*Hami, but those who were ungrateful, they devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable.* **(5:103)**

### CONTRADICTION IN TERMS

As the Quran deals with these aspects, it states first of all that God has not initiated those practices of consecrating cattle. Who, then, has set those practices for the ungratefuls? *God made not the thing called Bahirah nor Saibah nor Wasilah nor Hami, but those who were ungrateful, they devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable.* **(5:103)** Those who follow any code or doctrine other than the one God has laid down are ungratefuls, making false claims against God. They may enact their own laws and claim that these are God's law. Or they may claim for themselves the right to promulgate their own laws, allowing no room for God's law in their system, but at the same time, they claim that they do not disobey God. All this is no more than fabricating lies against God. *They devise lies against God and most of them are not reasonable.* **(5:103)**

The irony of what they say and do is made even clearer: *And when it was said to them: Approach now to what God caused to descend and to the Messenger, they said: Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* **(5:104)**

In response to such an attitude the Quran makes this reproachful comment: *They said: Enough is what we found our fathers upon. Even though their fathers had been knowing nothing nor are they truly guided?* **(5:104)** This denunciation of their following their forefathers, even though they were devoid of all knowledge, does not mean that had their forefathers had a wealth of knowledge, they would be right to follow them in abandoning what God has revealed. The sign merely makes a statement of fact, describing their situation and that of their predecessors. Yet surely no one would take up his own laws or those of his father, when he has access to God's law and the Sunnah of God's Messenger unless he is totally devoid of all knowledge and all guidance. Let such a person claim what he may about his knowledge and enlightenment. God's statement expresses the truth, which is further confirmed by reality. Only an ignorant, deviant ungrateful prefers human law to God's law.

### INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

When the situation of the ungratefuls was explained, the Chapter makes a statement showing the believers as a separate group, distinguished by the duties and obligations they have to fulfil. It defines for them what attitude they should take to other people. It tells them

that they may look forward to no reward other than that of God. They should aspire to no reward in this life. *O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls. He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided. To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

It is a case of a complete break between them and those who are hostile to their cause. Moreover, they should have a relationship of mutual support among themselves, since they form one community: *O those who believed! Upon you is the charge of your souls. He who went astray injures you not if you were truly guided. To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

What this sign says to the believers is that they should take care of themselves, purifying their souls and committing themselves wholly to their community, paying no attention to what others may say or do, even though they may go far astray. As believers, they are a separate unit, independent of all others. In this unit, they take care of one another, in complete mutual solidarity. Other than this, they have no need for any bonds or ties of loyalty with anyone.

For certain, this religion cannot establish its roots without effort and struggle. It needs followers who spare no effort to guide people to it in order to liberate them from subservience to other people so that they may submit to God alone. Such followers will do their utmost to establish the right concept of Godhead and to repel those who usurp God's authority so that God's law is seen to be implemented in human life. Such efforts are peaceful when the misguided ones are individuals in need of direction. However, force will be needed when there is a tyrannical power turning people away from God's guidance, and standing in the way of establishing the Quranic faith and implementing God's law. It is only then that the believers will have fulfilled their responsibility and those who persist in error are punished by God: *To God is the return of you all. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(5:105)**

### WITNESSES AT THE TIME OF DEATH

The passage is concluded with an outline of the rulings applicable to witnesses to a will, when the testator is away from home and from his society. These are the final rulings given in this Chapter on certain transactions in the Quranic society. They provide guarantees to ensure that people receive what is rightly theirs. **(5:106-5:108)**

The process outlined in these three signs indicates that a person who feels the end to be near and wants to make bequests assigning any money he has to his relatives should call in two Muslim wit-

nesses of probity and give them what property he has so that they may give it to his relatives who are not present. This applies when the person concerned is in his hometown. If he is travelling and does not find two Muslim witnesses to entrust his property to, then it is permissible to have two non-Muslim witnesses.

The Quranic signs state that these procedures ensure that witnesses remain true in their testimony, fearing that the first witnesses are rejected. Therefore, they try hard to be true to their trust. *That is likelier that they bring testimony in proper form or they fear that their oaths will be repelled after the others' oaths.* **(5:108)** These signs are concluded with a reminder to all people to remain God-conscious, and to watch God and obey His commandments. They are further reminded that God will not give His guidance to anyone who turns away from His path. *So be conscious of God and hear. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(5:108)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learn to take interdisciplinary philosophical, socio-political, scientific and Quranic concepts and opinions, considering them from various angles and points of view without ignoring anything and then examine them carefully. Try to arrive at logical conclusions and put aside all that fails in its logic. Your perspectives are developed through extended thought, discussion, and writing. You who are unsure what to think can be given time to reflect and come to tentative conclusions. You who have definite conclusions about the subject at hand can consider ideas from other perspectives, answer questions about what you think, or reflect on new situations or problems. You can compare what you say you believe with how you act. You can raise basic and important questions about what you learn, discovering and discussing underlying principles in your thought.

Have you tried the strategy below? How would your rate yourself?

One-to-one questioning may facilitate development of perspective, especially for those who think they've exhausted their ideas. This strategy will

also often coincide with evaluating actions and policies, arguments, or assumptions.You could explain how what you have learned from the Quranic signs has changed your thinking in some way. During classroom discussions, you should raise points made during study. You should relate your general ideas to specifics you have studied, explore important questions, and integrate the Quranic details.:

## LESSON 112(14). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

Quranic knowledge can be divided into multiple categories as this knowledge served as the basis for the development of Islamic sciences over the centuries. There are concepts that are basic to the study of Anthropology, History, Political Science, Mathematics, Logic and so forth. Understanding the interdisciplinary connections of the Quranic sacred text, take relevant concepts, knowledge and insight from the Quranic signs so that you are continuously finding connections between various categories of knowledge whether it be the basic principles of the arts or science.

Quranic critical thinkers:

> ... do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and insights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[2]

### INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS

**Science:** In doing research in the sciences, Quranic thinkers record from in depth observation, collecting as much information as possible and then critiquing their analysis of the gathered information so that they can draw the best possible inference through the use of inductive reasoning. He Who taugh by the pen. He taught the human being what he knows not. (96:4-96:5)

**Politics:** Quranic thinkers try to obtain their own inferences after listenin to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it. Those are those whom God guided. Those, they are imbued with intuition. (39:17-39:18) After listening to all opinions, they try to arrive at the best of the varying opinions as you differ in what you say. (51:8)

**Education:** Education in schools after listening to .... what is said and follow the fairer of it calls on students to learn all types of concepts, faiths and ideas and then choose their own.

**Psychology**: Our ability to reason (our cognitive system: *Will you not be reasonable?*) comes from our rational soul (*nafs-i natiqah*). We use our reason to help us regulate our animal soul (see Quran 12:53; *nafs-i ammarah*), our emotions and behavior by keeping them in a state of equilibrium, balance or moderation, on the Straight Path.

**Note for the Teacher**: Do not allow the somewhat arbitrary distinctions between academic subjects to control their thinking. When considering issues which transcend subjects, they bring relevant concepts, knowledge, and in-

sights from many subjects to the analysis. They make use of insights into one subject to inform their understanding of other subjects. There are always connections between subjects: language and logic; history, geography, psychology, anthropology, physiology; politics, geography, science, ecology; math, science, economics.[3]

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)

## SIGNS 5:109-5:115

**Madinah:** *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers*
*and will say: What was your answer?*
*They will say: We have no knowledge.*
*Truly, **You**, **You** alone are Knower of the unseen.* (5:109)
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:110)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:111)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:112)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:113)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:114)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:115)**

### COMMENTARY°

### WHEN ALL MESSENGERS ARE GATHERED TOGETHER

On the day when God will gather all [His] messengers and ask them: *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers and will say: What was your answer? They will say: We have no knowledge. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are Knower of the unseen.* **(5:109)**

Those messengers were sent at different times to their respective people, each going his own way to his city or village, and belonging to different races and nations, all preaching the same message to their communities. Then, the last of them, Muhammad, is given a single message addressed to all people of all races in all generations. Those messengers are gathered together by the One who sent them individually, and as they come together they bring with them the different responses they received. Now, in this scene, those messengers, representing humanity throughout its life span on earth, come together and stand before God, the Lord of all humanity on an awesome day.

The scene is full of life: *On a Day when God will gather the Messengers and will say: What was your answer?* **(5:109)** Today, everything is brought together, and messengers account for their messages. The results are declared before all humanity.

"What response did you receive?" Messengers are human. They know what they see and feel with their senses, but they have no

knowledge of what lies beyond. They had called on their peoples to follow divine guidance. Some responded positively while others turned away. A messenger does not know the full truth about a person responding positively, even though he may know the truth of the one turning away. He can only tell by appearances; it is God who knows the full truth and what is concealed. Those messengers are now in the presence of God and, among all human beings, they know God best, fear Him most and are too modest to speak out, in His presence, on the basis of their limited knowledge when He knows all.

This is an awesome interrogation, on the day when all creatures are gathered, the Supreme Company is present and all humanity is looking on. This is a confrontation, when all humanity is put face to face with the Messengers, and especially the ungratefuls who are now arrayed before those Messengers to whom they used to lie. Then the declaration is made that those noble messengers simply preached the divine faith, and that they are now in His presence stating what happened to their messages and giving an account of the reaction of their communities which denied them. Those messengers declare that true knowledge belongs to God alone. Whatever they knew should not, in all modesty and humility, be stated by them to God whose knowledge is perfect, absolute. *They will say: We have no knowledge. Truly, You, You alone are Knower of the unseen.* **(5:109)**

Those messengers who were sent before the time of Jesus were believed by some people and denied by others. Their account is thus completed with this general answer that they give, leaving all knowledge to God and putting the whole matter into His hands. Therefore, the Chapter adds nothing here about them. The address is made to Jesus alone, who was a total wonder to his people. It was Jesus who was surrounded with mystery and around whom all sorts of myth and superstition have circulated. A great deal of confusion has been made about his qualities, nature, birth and end.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Learning and studying techniques

Your path for most effective learning is through knowing...

Visual/spatial learning
Learning, for visual-spatial learners, takes place all at once...

Learning as a student-athlete or student-performer
Indicators of a "kinesthetic intelligence" or body smarts...

Learning as an adult
Does higher education seem like a foreign culture to you?

Active learning
Active learning is experiential, mindful, and engaging...

Action learning
Action learning is a learning and problem-solving strategy for organizations...

Mathematical language learning strategies
In learning the language of mathematics, we follow the advice that practice make perfect, and patience a helpful virtue...

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I followed the guidelines below:

- Do your homework!
- Read critically; form your own opinions
- Review your notes
- from the previous lecture and reading for the day
- Communicate immediately with professors about any study problems

## LESSON 112(15). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE

Known values of Quranic thinking include self-development (*jihad al-akbar*) and social improvement (*umma* as a middle community). Both of these require the recognition of gaps between ideals and practice as the gap causes a loss of truth and consistency. This strategy of recognizing the gaps between facts and ideals is connected with developing integrity and good faith.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 5: THE TABLE SPREAD WITH FOOD (AL-MAIDAH)
## SIGNS 5:116-5:120

**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:116)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:117)**
**Madinah: Book 28: Jesus son of Mary (5:118)**
*God would say: This Day the ones who are sincere will profit from their sincerity. For them are Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. God was well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him. That is the winning the sublime triumph.* (5:119)
*To God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in and on them. And He is Powerful over everything.* (5:120)

### COMMENTARY°

But where are those who invented such grave falsehood about Jesus in this whole scene? The Chapter does not mention them once. They may be feeling their ignominy and wish not to show themselves. We, therefore, leave them where the Chapter has left them. We will only look now at the final part in that remarkable scene: **(5:119)** The appropriate comment on the falsehood fabricated by liars against the noble Messenger Jesus, concerning the most serious issue of all, i.e. the issue of Godhead, is to state that truth will be of great benefit to its upholders on that awesome day. "This is the day when their truthfulness shall benefit all who have been truthful."

This is God's word at the end of that interrogation beheld by all creatures. It is the final and decisive word. It is coupled with the reward that befits truthfulness and those who are truthful: *For them are Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. God was well-pleased with them and they are well-pleased with Him.* **(5:119)** Each of these phrases represents a grade above the previous one: the gardens with running waters, the ever-

lasting abode there, the fact that God is pleased with them, and their pleasure with what they receive from Him. Therefore the description: *That is the winning the sublime triumph.* **(5:119)**

### THE FINAL NOTE

At the end of this passage and in contrast to the greatest falsehood ever perpetrated by the followers of any messenger, i.e. the falsehood of Christ's divine nature, which he himself denounces and leaves all decision about which to God alone, a statement of truth is made. It provides the final note in the Chapter, declaring that dominion over the heavens and the earth and all that they contain belongs to God, the Lord of the universe who has full control over all things. Nothing limits His power: *o God belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth and whatever is in and on them. And He is Powerful over everything.* **(5:120)**

This is the finale that suits the great question around which that terrible fallacy has been woven. It is an ending that fits that majestic scene where God is seen to be the One who has all knowledge, Godhead and all power. To Him alone all messengers turn, putting all matters in His hands. Indeed, to Him Jesus son of Mary assigns judgement in his own and his people's affair. He is Almighty, Wise, the Sovereign over the heavens, the earth and all they contain. It is a fitting conclusion to the Chapter which discusses the meaning of religion, showing it to be the implementation of only God's law, receiving guidance from Him alone and judging only on the basis of His revelations.

It is all one and the same issue: Godhead, the Oneness of God, and judgment on the basis of His guidance.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading

it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

# APPENDIX: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
18 = 109
19 = 105
20 = 113
21 = 114
22 = 112
23 = 53
24 = 80
25 = 97
26 = 91
27 = 85
28 =95
29 = 106
30 = 101
31 = 75
32 = 104
33 = 77
34 = 50
35 = 90
36 = 86
37 = 54
38 = 38
39 = 7
40 = 72
41 = 36
42 = 25
43 = 35
44 = 19
45 = 20
46 = 56
47 = 26
48 = 27
49 = 28
50 = 17
51 = 10
52 = 11
53 = 12
54 = 15
55 = 6
56 = 37
57 = 31
57 = 34
59 = 39
60 = 40
61 = 41
62 = 42
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64 = 44
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67 = 51
68 = 88
69 = 18
70 = 16
71 = 71
72 = 14
73 = 21
74 = 23
75 = 32
76 = 52
77 = 67
78 = 69
79 = 70
80 = 78
81 = 79
82 = 82
83 = 84
84 = 30
85 = 29
86 = 83
87 = 2
88 = 8
89 = 3
90 = 33
91 = 60
92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

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# CRITICAL THINKING AND THE CHRONOLOGICAL QURAN IN THE LIFE OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD

## THE YEAR 23 OF THE REVELATION (10 AH/631-632 CE)

LIBRARY OF ISLAM

*Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series Year 23*

# Critical Thinking and the Chronological Quran in the Life of Messenger Muhammad

## The Year 23 of the Revelation (10 AH/631-632 CE)

Laleh Bakhtiar

Library of Islam

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# YEAR 23 OF THE REVELATION

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## CA. APRIL 9, 631 CE-MARCH 28, 632 CE

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## THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *Book Year 1* to *Book Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. The chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are presented according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections, *ruku* (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter) in chronological order. The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation. Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators.

*Book Year 23*, the present volume, covers events from Muharram 1-Dhu al-Hijja 29, 10 AH/ca. April 9, 631 CE-March 28, 632 CE.

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud; Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job; Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr and Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.* The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual.* The last, *Book 30,* has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

At the beginning of each lesson, there is an exercise in critical thinking skills. These consist of one of the following: **The Nine Intellectual Standards, The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** and **The Seven Moral Traits.** The Eight Elements contain thirty-five strategies. However there is no specific order as to how they should be learned and incorporated into our thinking process.

Once we understand the critical thinking skills and then apply them to the signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. Once the skills as presented in the Quranic message are put into practice with the grace of God, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behavior.

Each lesson is followed by questions for classroom discussion or for dialogue. At the end of each lesson there is an assessment/assignment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they hopefully learn HOW the Quran teaches critical thinking.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (tafsir) by Sayyid Qutb's In the Shade of the Quran (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (tahqiq) and critical thinking (furqan) skills taught by the Quran. This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from The Sublime Quran. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of The Sublime Quran, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" comes from the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*). The Quran refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet

and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The words "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the ungrateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh, ungrateful for God's revelation and prophethood of Muhammad, who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims, as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well-intentioned a person may be, when speaking English, the use of the word Allah instead of God, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (tawhid). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: anta (where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By putting the pronoun **you** in bold font indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "ayah," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated and that a hafez of the Quran recites all the signs as they appear in the original Arabic revealed to the Prophet. Whatever signs scholars later determined to be abrogated are still part of the Quran and, therefore, are not relevant to learning to be a Quranic critical thinker, learning HOW to think.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (furqan, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (logic, being definitive, connected, appropriate, have worthiness, include numerous viewpoints, have right judgment, clarity, being fair and just) to: **II: The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, im-

plications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** (belief in One God (tawhid), God-consciousness (taqwa), virtuous conduct (birr) or integrity through moral discipline, empowering constancy ('azm) and courage, persevering in goodness (sabara), love (hubb) or empathic altruism (ihsan) and being fair and just (rashad). The signs (ayat) in each section (ruku) teach any or every one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or any and every one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or any or every one of the **Seven Quranic Moral Traits.**

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within a **point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and consequences. We use **concepts,** ideas and theories to **interpret information** (data, facts and experiences) in order to **answer questions,** solve problems, and resolve issues.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (sira). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning Strategies** or **The Seven Quranic Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE INTELLECTUAL STANDARDS

1. LOGIC (REASONABLE: 'AQALA, 'AQL)
2. DEFINITIVENESS (TO BE PRECISE: MUHKAMA)
3. CONNECTEDNESS (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: (MUQTARIN)
4. APPROPRIATENESS (TO MAKE RELEVANT: SADID)
5. WORTHINESS (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL,

TO BE SIGNIFICANT: AHL)
6. NUMEROUS OR MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: 'DHARA'A)
7. RIGHT JUDGMENT (RUSHD)
8. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: TABAYYANA)
9. BEING FAIR AND JUST ('AQL, RIGHT-MINDED (RASHAD))

**THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES**

**1. EMBODYING A POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: TADHAKKUR)**
THINKING INDEPENDENTLY
DEVELOPING INSIGHT INTO EGO-CENTRICITY OR SOCIO-CENTRICITY
EXPLORING THOUGHTS UNDERLYING FEELINGS AND FEELINGS UNDERLYING THOUGHTS
DEVELOPING INTELLECTUAL CURIOSITY

**2. GENERATING A PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: RA'A)**
CLARIFYING ISSUES OR CONCLUSIONS
CLARIFYING AND ANALYZING THE MEANINGS OF WORDS OR PHRASES
READING CRITICALLY: CLARIFYING OR DISCERNING THE SACRED TEXT
LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

**3. RAISING QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: TAFAKKARA)**
PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALOGICALLY: COMPARING INTERPRETATIONS
REASONING DIALECTICALLY: EVALUATING INTERPRETATIONS KNOWLEDGE, WISDOM
DEEP QUESTIONING

**4. USING INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: BASIRAH)**
DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION: CLARIFYING VALUES AND STANDARDS
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ACTIONS
DISTINGUISHING RELEVANT FROM IRRELEVANT INFORMATION
GIVING REASONS AND EVALUATING EVIDENCE

**5. MAKING INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: TABASSUR)**
ANALYZING OR EVALUATING ARGUMENTS AND INTERPRETATIONS
MAKING PLAUSIBLE INFERENCES OR INTERPRETATIONS
RECOGNIZING CONTRADICTIONS
NOTING SIGNIFICANT SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

**6. UTILIZING CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: IDHDHAKARA)**
COMPARING ANALOGOUS SITUATIONS: REFRAMING INSIGHTS TO NEW CONTEXTS

DEVELOPING ONE'S PERSPECTIVE: CREATING OR EXPLORING ARGUMENTS
MAKING INTERDISCIPLINARY CONNECTIONS
COMPARING AND CONTRASTING IDEALS WITH ACTUAL PRACTICE
THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING
7. MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: ZUNUN)
8. GENERATING IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: TADABBUR)
GENERATING OR ASSESSING SOLUTIONS
EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING STRATEGIES IN DETAIL

1. Embodying a **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generating a **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raising **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Using **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Making **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilizing **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Prin-**

**ciples, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are ... ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. Inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Making **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are ... ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generating **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (TAWHID)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (TAQWA)
3. VIRTUOUS CONDUCT THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: QANATA, GOODNESS, BIRR)
4. EMPOWERING CONSTANCY, COURAGE (AZM)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: SABARA)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: HUBB)
7. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGO-CENTRIC: ʿAQSATA)

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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My gratitude also goes to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

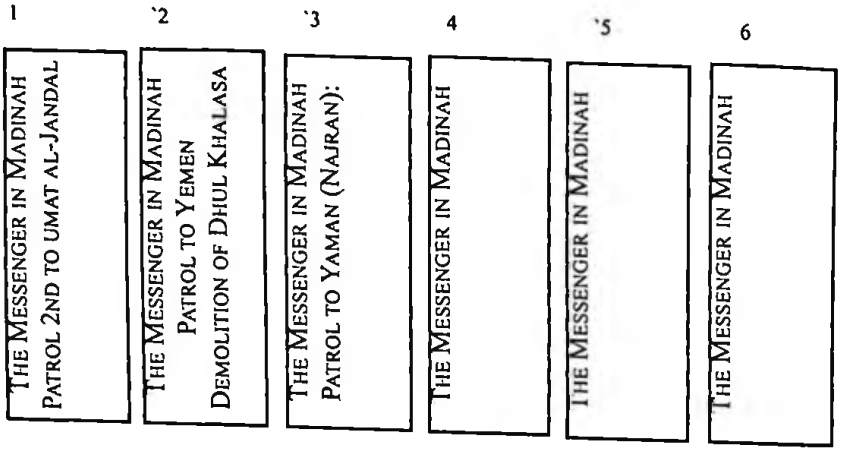
Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (furqan), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills they need to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, In the Shade of the Quran, in Chapter I of this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamic extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they learn of a Muslim tareas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 23*

## TIMELINE

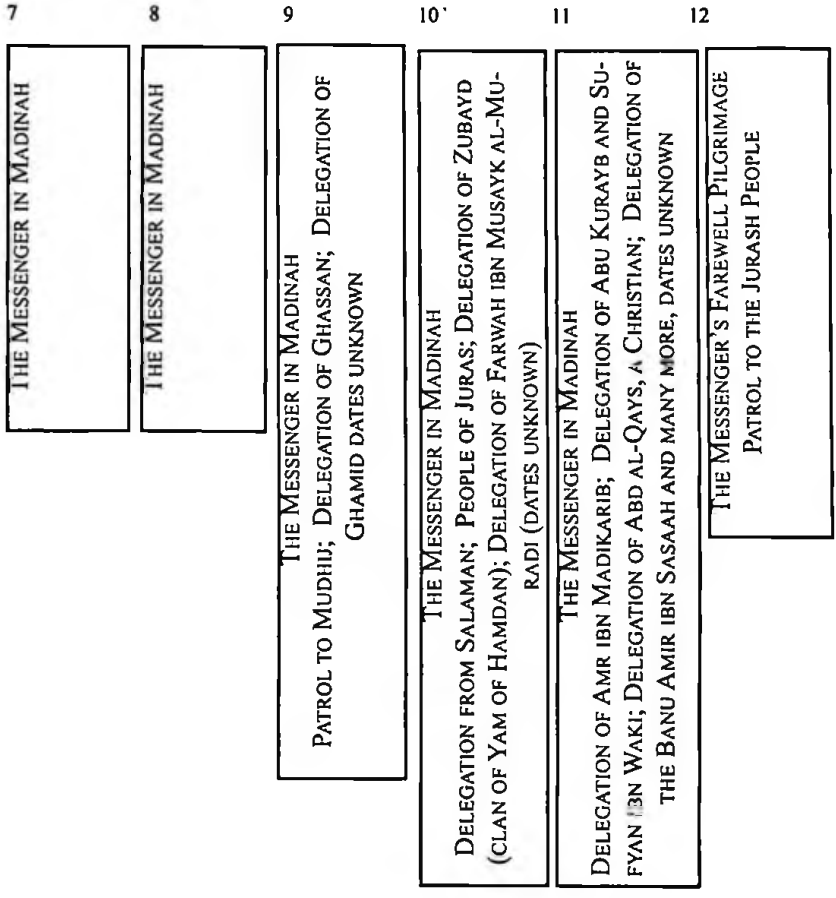



**Key**
1 = MUHARRAM
2 = SAFAR
3 = RABI I
4 = RABI II
5 = JAMADA I
6 = JAMADA II

Q= QURANIC SIGNS/ VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

# PREVIEW *BOOK YEAR 23*

## TIMELINE




**Key**

7 = RAJAB
8 = SHABAN
9 = RAMADAN
10 = SHAWWAL
11 = DHU AL-QADA
12 = DHU AL-HIJJA

Q= QURANIC SIGNS/ VERSES
CAMPAIGN, BATTLE, SIEGE = LED BY THE MESSENGER
PATROL = THE MESSENGER DOES NOT PARTICIPATE AND COMMANDS A COMPANION TO LEAD

Each Lesson begins with a critical thinking (*furqan*) standard, strategy or Quranic moral trait. It is important to note that when learning HOW to think which the Quran teaches, there is no specifically correct answer. It is going through the process of Quranic understanding that we learn HOW to think.

*Book Year 23* presented here begins with Lesson 113 and Quranic Chapter 9, the 113th chapter revealed.

## LESSON 113(1). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

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### QURANIC EXAMPLES OF THINKING PRECISELY ABOUT THINKING

The Quran encourages thinking about thinking (meta-cognition). God commands us to reflect about something carefully so one may not jump to conclusions without critical insight. *Say: Journey through the earth; then, look on how He began the creation. Again, God will cause the last growth to grow. Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (29:20)

God directs the attention of people to think by saying: Say to them. An example of the hundreds of "*Say*" signs: *Say: I admonish you in but one thing: That you stand up for God by twos and one by one. Again, reflect. There is not in your companion any madness. He is only a warner to you of a severe punishment in advance of you.* (34:46)

The Quran gives narratives of the past so that the people may think and reflect over them.

God tells us that the objective of so many stories which have been mentioned in various chapters is to motivate humanity to think and reflect in order to get lessons and to seek wisdom. *If We willed, We would have exalted him with them, but he inclined towards the earth, and followed his own desires. And his parable is like the parable of a dog. If you will attack it, it pants. Or if you will leave it, it pants. That is the parable of the folk, those who denied Our signs. Then, relate these narratives so that perhaps they will reflect.* (7:176)

In the field of *tawhid* and to direct human being's attention to the creator: *Truly, in the creation of the heavens and of the earth and the alteration of nighttime and daytime there are signs for those imbued with intuition, those who remember God while upright and sitting and on their sides and they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth: Our Lord! You had not created this in vain. Glory be to You! Then, protect us from the punishment of the fire.* (3:191-3:192)

*To reflect upon the signs in the Quran: It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those imbued with intuition recollect.* (38:29)

### WHAT ARE THE OBSTACLES TO BEING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKERS?

**Arrogance (*takabbur*)**: *The Messiah will never disdain that he be a servant of God nor the angels, the ones who are brought near to Him. Whoever disdains His worship and grows arrogant, He will assemble them altogether to Himself.* (2:34)

**Traditionalism and Blind Following (*taashub* and *taqlid*)**: *When it was said to them: Follow what God caused to descend. They said: Nay! We will follow whatever we discovered our fathers were following on it—even though*

*their fathers had been not at all reasonable—nor are they truly guided.* (2:170)

**Giving the Lie to the Messages (*takzib*)**: *Devised he a lie against God or is there a madness in him? Nay! Those who believe not in the world to come there is a punishment and a going far astray.* (34:8)

**Hypocrisy (*nifaq*)**: *They, those who say: Spend not on such ones who are with the Messenger of God until they break away. To God belongs the treasures of the heavens and the earth but the ones who are hypocrites understand not.* (63:7)

**Ignorance and Not Being Aware of the Truth (*jahlu*)**: *Even if We sent down the angels to them and the dead spoke to them and we assembled everything against them, face to face, yet they would not believe unless God wills, except many of them are ignorant.* (6:111)

**Lust and Desires (*hawa*)**: *Surely, He explained distinctly to you what He forbade to you unless you were driven by necessity to it. Truly, many cause others to go astray by their desires without knowledge. Truly, your Lord, He is greater in knowledge of the ones who exceed the limits.* (6:119)

**Reliance on Conjecture, Opinion**: *If you have obeyed most of who are on the earth, they will cause you to go astray from the way of God. They follow nothing but opinion and they only guess.* (6:116)

**Turning Away from the Truth (*fasiqun*, ones who disobey)**: *O Prophet! Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful and the ones who are hypocrites and be you harsh against them. Their place of shelter will be hell. Miserable will be the Homecoming! They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. They were about to do something that they never attain. They sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace. If they repent, it would be better for them. If they turn away, God will punish them with a painful punishment in the present and in the world to come. There is not for them on earth either a protector or a helper.* (9:73-9:74)

## QURANIC CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)

## SIGNS 9:1-9:6

**Madinah:** *God and His Messenger declare disassociation*
*from those with whom you made a contract*
*among the ones who were idol worshippers who violated it:* (9:1)
*Roam about on the earth for four months*
*and know that you will not be ones who frustrate God*
*and that God is One Who Covers with shame*
*the ones who are ungrateful.* (9:2)
*And the announcement from God and His Messenger*
*to humanity on the day of the greater pilgrimage to Makkah*
*is that God is free from the ones who are idol worshippers*

*and so is His Messenger.*
*Then, it will be better for you if you repented.*
*But if you turned away,*
*then, know that you are not ones who frustrate God.*
*And give* ***you*** *tidings to those who were ungrateful*
*of a painful punishment.* (9:3)
*But those with whom you made a contract*
*—among the ones who are idol worshippers—*
*and again, they reduce you not at all*
*nor do they back anyone against you,*
*then, fulfill their compact with them*
*until their term of contract expires.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* (9:4)
*When the months of pilgrim sanctity were drawn away,*
*then, kill the ones who are polytheists wherever you found them*
*and take them and besiege them and sit in every place of ambush.*
*Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer*
*and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (9:5)
*And if anyone of the ones who are idol worshippers*
*sought asylum with* ***you***
*then, grant him protection*
*so that he hears the assertions of God.*
*Again, convey thou him to a place of safety.*
*That is because they are a folk who know not.* (9:6)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE PRINCIPLES OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

*God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it:* **(9:1)** This is a general declaration, carrying a sharp rhythm, which outlines the basic principles that governed relations between the Muslims and the idolaters at the time, throughout the Arabian Peninsula. The treaties to which it refers were those that the Messenger had concluded with the idolaters in Arabia. The disavowal of these treaties by God and His Messenger defines the attitude of every Muslim. It generates a very strong impression on Muslim minds to leave no room whatsoever for hesitation or second thought.

This general statement is followed by qualifications and explanations: *Roam about on the earth for four months and know that you will not be ones who frustrate God and that God is One Who Covers with shame the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:2)** This statement clarifies the terms now given to the ungrateful. They are given a period

of four months during which they can move about freely to carry out business transactions, fulfil their commitments and modify their situations in peace.

With this four-month notice period, the idolaters are reminded of God's will which in turn sends fear into their hearts. They are meant to open their eyes to the fact that they can never escape God's judgement. They cannot seek refuge against what God has determined for them, which was certain disgrace and humiliation: *You will not be ones who frustrate God and that God is One Who Covers with shame the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:2)** How could they escape God's judgment and what refuge could they seek when they, and the whole world, were in His grasp? He has predetermined to inflict misery and disgrace on the ungrateful. No power can ever stop God's will.

This is followed by specifying the time when this disavowal was to be announced to the ungrateful, so that they would be fully aware of the time limits it included: "And a proclamation from God and His Messenger is hereby made to all humanity on this day of the greater pilgrimage: *And the announcement from God and His Messenger to humanity on the day of the greater pilgrimage to Makkah is that God is free from the ones who are polytheists and so is His Messenger. Then, it will be better for you if you repented. But if you turned away, then, know that you are not ones who frustrate God. And give you tidings to those who were ungrateful of a painful punishment.* **(9:3)**

The Arabic term used in this passage for proclamation signifies an assurance that those to whom the proclamation is made have received it. This properly took place during the pilgrimage, when the disavowal by God and His Messenger of all treaties with all idolaters was made. An exception was then added in the next sign which allowed certain treaties to run their term. This is most appropriate. First the general principle is outlined because it is the one which constitutes the permanent situation. Then the exception is made because it applied to specific cases that would end once the term specified had been reached.

The believers are also reassured while the ungrateful are threatened with misery and humiliation. Those who turn away are warned that they cannot escape God's judgement: **(9:2-9:3)**

With the termination of all treaties and the proclamation of absolute disavowal, the ungrateful are encouraged once again to seek and follow divine guidance and warned against the consequences of remaining in error: *Then, it will be better for you if you repented. But if you turned away, then, know that you are not ones who frustrate*

*God. And give you tidings to those who were ungrateful of a painful punishment.* **(9:3)**

This warning and encouragement to the ungrateful to mend their ways, coming as they do in this particular context of disavowal of treaties, are indicative of the Quranic approach. It is first and foremost an approach seeking to give guidance to people. The idolaters are given this four-month grace period not only because the Quranic message does not like to take them by surprise but also because it does not want to inflict on them unnecessary humiliation. These have always been the essence of power relations, except under the Quranic message. The truce also gives the idolaters a chance to reflect and reconsider their options. Therefore, they are encouraged to choose divine guidance and turn back to God in submission. They are warned against turning away and shown that it will inevitably lead them to a position of grievous suffering in the hereafter, which compounds their humiliation in this life.

It is important to reflect on the comment which concludes the sign that requires the Muslims to remain true to their obligations: *Then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:4)** It relates the fulfilment of obligations to righteousness and to God's love of the righteous. Thus, God makes the fulfilment of obligations to people an act of worship addressed to Him and an aspect of the piety He loves. This is the basis of the Quranic ethics. the Quranic message does not act on the basis of gain and interest, or on the basis of constantly changing traditions. All the Quranic ethics are based on worshipping God and being conscious of Him, which is the essence of righteousness. A Muslim brings his behavior in line with that which he knows to please God. His aim is to win God's pleasure and to ensure that He is not displeased with him. This is the essence of the strong hold the Quranic ethics have on Muslims. These ethics also serve people's interests and work for their benefit. They establish a society in which friction and contradiction are reduced as much as possible. They also help human beings in their continuous march to a higher standard of humanity.

### HONORING COMMITMENTS

The exception is then made in the case of treaties specifying a term of validity. These were allowed to remain in force for the rest of their term: *But those with whom you made a contract—among the ones who are polytheists—and again, they reduce you not at all nor do they back anyone against you, then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who*

*are God-conscious.* **(9:4)**

### WHEN THE PERIOD OF GRACE IS OVER

Thus the opening signs of the Chapter make it clear that God and His Messenger would have no dealings whatsoever with the idolaters, whether or not they had a treaty with the Messenger. They were given a four-month period of grace in which they were safe. When this period was over, treaties would continue to be observed to the end of their terms, but only with those who were true to their obligations under those treaties, and did not collaborate with any enemy of the Muslims. Now the Chapter mentions what the Muslims were to do when the four-month grace period was over.

The Quranic instruction is very clear. A state of all-out war was then to be declared: *When the months of pilgrim sanctity were drawn away, then, kill the ones who are polytheists wherever you found them and take them and besiege them and sit in every place of ambush. Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:5)**

The word which is used here to describe those four months in the Quranic text is one which describes the four months when fighting is not allowed except to repel aggression. These form two periods every year when people can go freely, secure from any danger of war. Because of the same usage scholars have disagreed in their interpretations of this statement here, on whether the four months meant the same ones observed annually, i.e. Dhu al-Qada, Dhu al-Hijja, Muharram and Rajab. In that case, the remaining period of grace given after the declaration of the termination of treaties would only be the rest of Dhu al-Hijja and Muharram, i.e. 50 days. Or were these four months, when fighting was forbidden, to start on the day of sacrifice and to end on 10 Rabi 2? A third point of view suggests that the first interpretation applies in the case of those who had violated their treaties and the second applies to those who did not have any treaty and those who had treaties with an unspecified duration.

The correct interpretation, in our view, is that the four months meant here are different from the four sacred months observed annually. The same description is given to both because fighting during them is forbidden. This new period of grace also applied to all, except in the case of those who had treaties lasting for a specified length of time, in which case such treaties were to be honored in full. Since God has said to them: You may go freely in the land for four months, then the four months must start from the day when the announcement was made to them. This fits with the nature of this announcement.

God's instructions to the Muslims were clear: when the four months were over, they were to kill any idolater wherever he was found, or they were to take him captive, or besiege him if he was in a fortified place, or lie in wait for him so that he could not escape without punishment, except for those to whom obligations were to be observed for as long as their treaties remained in force. Indeed the idolaters were given enough notice, which meant that they were not taken by surprise. Nor did they fall victim to any treachery. Their treaties were terminated publicly and they were made fully aware of what was to be done with them.

Moreover, this was not meant as a campaign of vengeance or extermination, but rather as a warning which provided a motive for them to accept the Quranic message. *Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.* **(9:5)** For 22 years they had been listening to the message of the Quranic message put to them in the clearest possible way. For 22 years they were, nevertheless, trying to suppress the message of the Quranic message by persecution, open warfare and forging alliances to destroy the Quranic state. This was a long history that contrasted with the never failing tolerance of the Quranic message, as demonstrated by God's Messenger and his Companions. Nevertheless, the Quranic message was now opening its arms to them. Instructions are here issued to the Messenger and the Muslims, the very victims of persecution who were driven out of their homeland and suffered a war of aggression, to extend a hand of welcome to those idolaters should they turn to God in repentance. Such repentance should be genuine, confirmed by their observance of the main duties of the Quranic message. That is because God never rejects anyone who turns to Him in sincere repentance, no matter how great his sins are: *Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:5)**

We do not here want to go into any of the arguments which are frequently found in books of commentary on the Quran or the Quranic jurisprudence, i.e. *fiqh*, concerning the proviso mentioned in this sign: *Then, if they repented and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms, then, let them go their way.* **(9:5)** These arguments discuss whether these are the essential conditions of being a Muslim, in the sense that a person who does not observe them is considered an ungrateful. They also discuss whether these are sufficient for the acceptance of anyone who declares repentance without going into the other basic duties of the Quranic message. We do not feel this sign is concerned with any such argument. Rather, it simply tackles a real situation involving the idolaters in Arabia at the time. None of these would have declared their repentance, prayed regularly

and paid the *zakat* without the full intention of submitting themselves to God and being Muslims in the full sense of the word. Therefore the Quranic sign specifies the declaration of repentance, regular prayers and *zakat* payment as a mark of the acceptance of the Quranic message in full with all its conditions and significance. The first of these is naturally the submission to God by declaring one's belief that there is no deity other than God and belief in the Messenger Muhammad's message by declaring that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This sign is not, then, about making any rulings on legal matters, but it outlines practical steps to deal with a particular situation where certain circumstances applied.

### ASYLUM FOR THE ENEMY

Yet despite the declaration of war against all the idolaters after the four months are over, the Quranic message continues to demonstrate its grace as well as its serious and realistic approach. It does not seek to exterminate all idolaters. On the contrary, it also declares a campaign of guidance whenever that is possible. Individual idolaters who are not part of a hostile and belligerent community are guaranteed safety in the land of the Quranic message. God instructs His Messenger to give them asylum so that they may listen to God's word and become aware of the nature of the Quranic message before they are given safe conduct to their own domiciles. All this, even though they are still idolaters: *And if anyone of the ones who are polytheists sought asylum with you, then, grant him protection so that he hears the assertions of God. Again, convey you him to a place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.* **(9:6)**

This shows how the Quranic message was keen to reach out to every heart with its guidance. No single case was to be taken lightly. Whoever appeals for protection shall be granted it. Anyone who seeks such asylum cannot at the same time try to join a hostile force seeking to undermine the Muslim community. Therefore granting protection to such a person provides him with the opportunity to listen to the Quran and to get to know the true nature of the Quranic faith. When God's word is heard in such an atmosphere, hearts may well respond positively. Even if they do not, the Muslims are still required to ensure the safety of anyone who appeals for their help until he is returned to a place where he feels secure.

This is one of the sublime heights to which the Quranic message raises its community. Protection is provided for an idolater, an enemy who might have participated in persecution of the Muslims themselves. Now they are required to give him safe conduct until he has reached a place where he feels secure outside the Muslim state. This

is a mark of the Quranic method of action. It is a method of guidance, and guidance remains its ultimate goal even when its efforts are concentrated on the protection of the land of the Quranic message.

*And if anyone of the ones who are polytheists sought asylum with you, then, grant him protection so that he hears the assertions of God. Again, convey you him to a place of safety. That is because they are a folk who know not.* **(9:6)**

This religion seeks to provide knowledge to those who lack such knowledge, and to give protection to whoever appeals for protection, even though they may belong to the enemy camp and who might have fought to suppress the Quranic message. It resorts to the use of force only to destroy physical forces that prevent people from listening to God's word and stop them from knowing what He has revealed. Such forces deprive them of the chance to follow God's guidance and force them into submission to beings other than God. When such physical forces have been destroyed and impediments have been removed, individuals are given protection, despite choosing to remain ungrateful. the Quranic message only informs them of God's word without subjecting them to fear or pressure, and grants them protection and security, the fact that they continue to reject God's message notwithstanding.

This is, then, an outline of the final rulings that determine the relations between the Muslim community and the remaining idolaters in Arabia. They mean an end to the state based on peace agreements with all idolaters, after four months in some cases and at the end of their specified terms in others.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### QURANIC CHALLENGES

Quranic references to concentrated and goal-oriented thinking provoked by the challenge to find something new or to solve a difficult problem (*tadabbur*) and the exercise of intellect occur in conjunction with basically five major themes:

Belief in the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)
Reflection on the Quran

The Human Being and the Universe
Historical Precedent
Thinking Itself

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I know that I cannot interpret information without ideas or concepts, or some way to give meaning.

I am able to find the key idea, the central concept of the signs.

I know the subject of the concept and its vocabulary.

I know that I think within a vocabulary.

I use these vocabulary terms because they are powerful tools for thinking.

## LESSON 113(2). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## MAKING ASSUMPTIONS, PROPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED

What is an assumption? An assumptions is a conjecture, a guess, an opinion, a premise, a hypothesis of a thing that is accepted as true or as certain to happen, without proof. All human thought and action or experiences are based on assumptions. The thought process needs them in order to be able to move forward. The key is for students to be aware of them.

In understanding your own assumptions as you try to exercise Quranic thinking, you begin to realize that you can't figure out everything simultaneously. You have to make assumptions to figure something out. It is not possible to have many unanswered questions at the same time. The mind must make assumptions as it works to problem solve. It must take something for granted. You know that you can always question assumptions as you move forward in your thought process. At the same time, you should think about the assumptions that you are making. You should try to make them with some awareness by asking yourself: Do they make sense? You are in a better position to evaluate any reasoning or behavior when all of the elements of that reasoning or behavior are made explicit. You base both your reasoning and your behavior on beliefs you take for granted. You are often unaware of these assumptions. It is only by recognizing them that you can evaluate them.

Quranic thinkers have a passion for truth and for accepting the strongest reasoning. Thus, they have the intellectual courage to seek out and reject false assumptions of others. They realize that everyone makes some questionable assumptions. They are willing to question, and have others question, even their own most cherished assumptions. They consider alternative assumptions. They base their acceptance or rejection of assumptions on their rational scrutiny of them. They hold questionable assumptions with an appropriate degree of tentativeness. Independent thinkers evaluate assumptions for themselves, and do not simply accept the assumptions of others, even those assumptions made by everyone they know.

## QURANIC CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
## SIGNS 9:7-9:16

**Madinah:** *How will there be*
*for the ones who are idol worshippers*
*a compact with God and with His Messenger*
*but for those with whom you made a contract*
*near the Masjid al-Haram?*
*If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them.*
*Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* (9:7)
*How?*
*And if they get the better of you,*

*they regard not ties of relationship with you nor a pact?*
*They please you with their mouths,*
*but their hearts refuse compliance*
*and many of them are ones who disobey.* (9:8)
*They sold out the signs of God for a little price*
*and barred others from His way.*
*Truly, how evil is what they had been doing.* (9:9)
*They regard not towards one who believes*
*either ties of relationship or a pact.*
*And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits.* (9:10)
*But if they repented and performed the formal prayer*
*and gave the purifying alms, then,*
*they are your brothers/sisters in your way of life,*
*We explain the signs distinctly for a folk who know.* (9:11)
*But if they broke their sworn oaths after their compact*
*and discredited your way of life,*
*then, fight the leaders of ingratitude.*
*Truly, they, their sworn oaths are nothing to them,*
*so that perhaps they will refrain themselves.* (9:12)
*Will you not fight a folk who broke their sworn oaths*
*and were about to expel the Messenger?*
*Began they the first time against you?*
*Will you dread them?*
*God has a better right that you should dread Him*
*if you had been ones who believe.* (9:13)
*Fight them! God will punish them by your hands*
*and cover them with shame*
*and help you against them.*
*And He will heal the breasts of a folk, ones who believe,* (9:14)
*and He causes to be put away the rage in their hearts.*
*And God turns to whom He wills in forgiveness.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:15)
*Or assumed you that you would be left*
*before God knows those who struggled among you?*
*And take not anyone to yourselves*
*other than God and His Messenger*
*and the ones who believe as intimate friends.*
*And God is Aware of what you do.* (9:16)

## COMMENTARY°

The very idea that idolaters may have a treaty with God and His Messenger is questioned, except for those who had shown true commitment in observing their treaty with honesty. With these the exist-

ing treaties were to be honored for the rest of their terms, as long as the ungrateful remained faithful to them. The believers are warned, however, that the idolaters would try to do them harm whenever they could as also feeling that they would escape punishment. **(9:7-9:10)**

This termination of the state of peace based on treaties and agreements is followed by a rhetorical question stating that it is just not possible that idolaters should have such covenants with God and His Messenger. The very principle of having such agreements is rejected outright: *How will there be for the ones who are polytheists a compact with God and with His Messenger?* **(9:7)**

This outright denunciation, coming as it does in the signs that follow the opening ones, may be understood to abrogate the first rulings which allowed the continued observance of treaties with those who fulfilled their obligations under those rulings and did not provide any assistance to any group hostile to the Muslim community. In order to dispel any such misunderstanding, the ruling is restated once more: *but for those with whom you made a contract near the Masjid al-Haram ?If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.***(9:7)**

This restatement adds a new provision. The first instruction required the Muslims to honor their obligations to those who had shown their true commitment to their peace agreements and fulfilled their own obligations under such agreements. Now the instruction to keep faith with them is qualified, making it clear that the Muslims were to honor their obligations to them for as long as they themselves continued to observe their treaties in full, as they did in the past. Here we note the careful phraseology of texts relating to dealings, transactions and relations with others. Implicit understanding is not sufficient. It is followed by a clear statement.

### NO PEACE POSSIBLE

*How will there be for the ones who are polytheists a compact with God and with His Messenger?* **(9:7)** The idolaters do not submit themselves truly to God, nor do they acknowledge His Messenger or the message he conveys to them. How could they, then, have a treaty with God and His Messenger? They do not simply deny a creature like themselves, or a constitution devised by human beings. Rather, they deny the One who has created them and continues to provide them with sustenance to preserve their lives. By so doing they place themselves in opposition to God and His Messenger. How is it conceivable, then, that they should have a treaty with them? The rhetorical question posed by the Chapter addresses the very principle of having such a treaty. It is not concerned with any particular appli-

cation of the principle.

Although the principle itself is denounced, God has permitted the honoring of treaties with those who continued to honor their obligations. He only made the proviso that this should be reciprocated, which means that treaties were to be honored by the Muslims as long as the idolaters continued to honor them: *But for those with whom you made a contract near the Masjid al-Haram? If they go straight with you, then, go straight with them. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:7)**

Unlike what some contemporary commentators have understood, those people who had a treaty signed at the Sacred Mosque were the same group as they to whom reference was made earlier in the Chapter: *But those with whom you made a contract—among the ones who are polytheists—and again, they reduce you not at all nor do they back anyone against you, then, fulfill their compact with them until their term of contract expires. Truly, God loves the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:4)** The two signs refer to the same group. However, the first reference makes an exception in their case as opposed to all those whose treaties are terminated. They are mentioned again in **(9:7)** in connection with the denunciation of the principle of making peace agreements with idolaters. Their second mention is necessary to make it clear that there is no abrogation of the first ruling in their favor. The righteous and the God- fearing are mentioned on both occasions, using the same Arabic word for both, and highlighting the fact that God loves those who are righteous and God-fearing, to indicate that the subject matter is the same. The second statement completes the conditions stated earlier. In the first, their past attitude of honoring their obligations is mentioned, and in the second the condition of their continued observance of these obligations is made clear. The careful phraseology requires that both statements are taken together to grasp the meaning in full.

The principle of making peace with the idolaters is then denounced on historical and practical grounds, after it had been denounced on grounds of faith. Both sets of reasons are grouped together in the signs that follow: **(9:8-9:10)**

How is it conceivable that the idolaters should have a covenant with God and His Messenger when they do not make any agreement with you unless they are unable to overcome you? Should they prevail over you, they would subject you to their wrath, observing no agreement, honoring no commitment and heeding no moral or ethical value. They would respect no pledge and allow no limit in the punishment they would inflict on you if only they could prevail against you in war. They would not even respect the values of their own so-

ciety, risking any criticism they might incur for not abiding by these limits. No matter what agreements they may have with you, their blind hatred of you causes them to trespass all limits and violate all commitments, if only they can prevail over you. What prevents them from doing that now is not the sort of agreements they have with you. They are only prevented by the fact that they cannot achieve victory over you in battle. Now that you are too strong for them, they try to please you with what they say and by showing that they are true to their commitments. But in truth, their hearts are full of grudges against you. With such heart-burning animosity, they will always wish you ill. They have no desire to be in a relation of friendship with you and they harbour no good intention towards you.

### NO OBLIGATION HONORED

There is a basic reason for their treacherous attitude **(9:8-9:9)**: that they are transgressors who have deviated widely from God's guidance. They have bartered away God's revelations for a paltry price in the shape of fleeting pleasures and temporary comforts. They fear that adopting the Quranic message will deny them some or all of these interests or that it may involve some financial cost. Therefore they do not merely refuse to accept the Quranic message, but they also try to debar others from its path. This is, then, the result of the deal they made when they exchanged God's message for a paltry price. Therefore, they turn away from God's path and debar others from following it. What they do is evil indeed, as God Himself states: *Truly, how evil is what they had been doing.* **(9:9)**

Faith is then the cause of all their hatred for the believers. Therefore their ill-will and atrocities are directed against every believer: *They regard not towards one who believes either ties of relationship or a pact. And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits.* **(9:10)** It is in their nature that they are aggressors. Their aggression begins with their hatred of the divine faith and their rejection of its message. It is their aggression that leads them to stand in opposition to faith and adopt a hostile attitude to the believers, respecting no treaty or obligation of honor. Therefore, should they prevail and feel that they can get away with what they want, they will resort to any atrocity without limit.

God then gives His instructions on how the believers should react to this state of affairs: **(9:11-9:12)** In view of such a long history as well as the nature of the inevitable battle between God's message, which seeks to free humanity from subjugation by other creatures in order that they submit to God alone, and *jahiliyyah* systems which seek to make some people tyrannize over others, God gives a very

clear and decisive directive to the Muslims.

The choice before them, then, is clear. They may accept what the Muslims have accepted and repent of whatever aggression and transgression they have committed. In this case, the Muslims will forgive them for whatever they might have committed against them in the past. A new relationship will then be established which makes these new Muslims brothers of the older Muslims and the past is forgiven and forgotten altogether: *We explain the signs distinctly for a folk who know.* **(9:11)** These rulings are best appreciated and acted upon by the people of knowledge who are the believers.

**AN ATTITUDE CONFIRMED BY HISTORY**

As for the Arabian stage, the events that took place during the lifetime of the Messenger are sufficient to give us a clear answer. In our commentary on this Chapter alone we have enough information to describe the attitude of the idolaters towards this religion and its followers ever since its early days in Makkah up to the time of the revelation of these signs. It is true that the later and much longer-lasting conflict was between the Quranic message on the one hand and the Jews and Christians on the other, rather than between the Quranic message and idolatry. Nevertheless, the idolaters have always adopted the same attitude towards Muslims as described in these signs: **(9:8-9:10)** They simply do what the Quran states: *They regard not towards one who believes either ties of relationship or a pact. And those, they are the ones who exceed the limits.* **(9:10)**

The believers are further reminded of their own bitter experiences with them, and their feelings of happiness at the crushing of their enemy by God's might. **(9:13-9:15)**

They are told that they must cut themselves off, as far as family relations with the ungrateful were concerned. They are required to weaken the effects of their family ties with the ungrateful. They are told to choose between those ties of blood and friendship on the one hand and God and His Messenger on the other. **(9:23-9:24)**

They are also reminded of the numerous victories they achieved with God's help, the most recent of which was the Battle of Hunayn. They were able to achieve victory only when God provided them with His help and gave reassurance to His Messenger who remained steadfast: **(9:25-9:26)**

They are also reassured about their provisions, and that they should not fear any loss of trade or lack of business. What they get is subject to God's will, not to the apparent causes people associate with profitable business: *O those who believed! Truly, the ones who are polytheists are unclean, so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year. And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed. Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)**

All these concerns which required reassurance and clear judgement are indicative of the situation that prevailed in the Muslim state in Madinah. Had it not been for the fact that the Muslim community in Madinah was firm in its belief, stable and enlightened, these conditions might have represented a serious threat to it, and to the very existence of the Quranic message itself.

### DOUBTS DISPELLED

These **(9:13-9:16)** signs come immediately after questions have been raised over the very principle of a treaty or a covenant being granted to the idolaters by God and His Messenger. In the same signs the idolaters were given the choice either to accept the faith based on submission to God alone or open warfare, except for the person who may seek refuge with the Muslims. Such a person is given shelter and made to listen to God's revelations before he is given safe conduct to his place of security. The reason for questioning the principle itself is that the idolaters will never respect any agreement or obligation of honor with regard to any believer when they prevail over the Muslims.

The whole history of the idolaters with the believers is one of violating solemn pledges and breaching agreements. **(9:13)** The most recent example was the violation of the peace treaty concluded at al-Hudaybiyah. Acting on instructions from his Lord, the Messenger accepted in that agreement their conditions which were felt by some of his best Companions to be totally unfair to the Muslims. He fulfilled his obligations under that agreement as meticulously as possible. For their part, the idolaters did not respect their agreement, nor did they fulfil their obligations. Within two years, and at the first opportunity, they committed a flagrant breach of their obligations, extending active support to their allies who launched a treacherous attack against the Messenger's allies.

*Will you dread them?* **(9:13)** They should not refrain from fighting the idolaters, after this long history of treachery, unless they were afraid of them. But this question is followed by a statement which stirs new feelings of determination and courage: *God has a better right that you should dread Him if you had been ones who believe.* **(9:13)** A true believer fears no creature whatsoever, because he only fears God. So they should examine their true feelings, because if they are true believers they will fear no one other than God.

### AN ORDER TO FIGHT

The feelings of those early Muslims were heightened when they were reminded of those events: how the idolaters plotted to assassi-

nate the Messenger, and how they repeatedly violated their agreements with the Muslims and launched a treacherous attack against them, taking them by surprise whenever a chance presented itself. They also remembered how the idolaters, in their despotic insolence, were the first to attack them. With their feelings so heightened, they are encouraged to fight the idolaters and are promised victory over them: **(9:14-9:15)**

When you fight them, God will make you the means of the execution of His will, and He will bring about their punishment by your hands, causing them to be defeated and humiliated after they have arrogantly been demonstrating their power. With the victory He will grant you, God will make the believers who had been at the receiving end of the idolaters' repression and persecution happy. This happiness will come about as a result of the complete victory of the truth and the defeat of falsehood and its advocates.

But this is not all. There is more good news and more reward for certain people: *And God turns to whom He wills in forgiveness.* **(9:15)** When the Muslims achieve victory some of the idolaters may open their hearts to the truth. They may be able to recognize that this victory was achieved with the help of a power that is totally superior to all that human beings can muster. They may appreciate the effects faith brings about in the outlook and behavior of the believers and feel that faith makes its followers better people. All this takes place in reality. Therefore the believers receive the reward for their jihad and struggle against ingratitude, and they are rewarded for enabling ungrateful to see the truth of faith. the Quranic message will gain in strength as a result of those who join its ranks after the victory of the believers: *And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:15)** He knows the outcome of events before they even take place, and in His wisdom, He is aware of the results and effects of forthcoming actions and moves.

It was also necessary that the Muslims should launch their struggle against all the idolaters as one camp, and that all treaties with all the idolaters should be terminated at the same time, and that the Muslims would form a solid, united camp against all idolaters. Thus, those who had harbored different intentions and sought excuses of business, blood relations or other interests to justify their continued dealings with the idolaters should make their true position clear, free of all ambiguity. All such excuses had to be tested so that those who make of them a means to maintain close relations with the idolaters, in preference to their association with God, His Messenger and the believers should be known. If such excuses could be made in the past when relations between different camps had not crystallized, there was no room for any ambiguity now: *Or assumed you that you would*

*be left before God knows those who struggled among you? And take not anyone to yourselves other than God and His Messenger and the ones who believe as intimate friends.* **(9:16)**

God has known such people all the time. Nothing is added to God's knowledge as a result of any event or action. "*And God is Aware of what you do.* **(9:16)** He, however, holds people to account only for what appears of their reality through their own actions. It is His method to test people so that their true feelings and what they harbour in their innermost hearts are made to appear. The best way to do this is to test them with hardship.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### HOW ARE ASSUMPTIONS USED IN THE QURAN?

When students study Quranic concepts, there is something that they find in the signs that refer to assumptions people make. For example: *Assumes he that none has power over him? He says: I have caused abundant wealth to perish. Assumes he that none sees him? Make we not two eyes for him and a tongue and two lips and guided him to the two open highways? Yet he rushed not onto the steep ascent. What will cause you to recognize what the steep ascent is? It is the liberating of a bondsperson or feeding on a day possessing famine an orphan, possessor of kinship, or a needy, possessor of misery. Again, it had been among those who believed and counseled one another to having patience and counseled one another to clemency.* (90:5-90:17)

Much of what is wrong with human thought can be found in the uncritical or unexamined assumptions that underlie it. For example, students often experience the world in such a way as to assume that they are observing things just as they are, as though they were seeing the world without the filter of a point of view. People they disagree with, of course, they recognize as having a point of view. *Say: Shall We tell you who will be ones who are losers by their actions? It is those whose endeavoring went astray in this present life while they assume that they are doing good by their handiwork.* (18:103-18:104)

One of the key dispositions of critical thinking is the on-going sense that as humans students always think within a perspective, that they virtually never

experience things totally and absolutely. There is a connection therefore between thinking so as to be aware of their assumptions and being intellectually humble. *Assumed humanity that they will be left because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)

All reasoning must begin somewhere, must take some things for granted. Any 'defect' in the assumptions or presuppositions with which the reasoning begins is a possible source of problems. Assessing skills of reasoning involves assessing the ability to recognize and articulate their assumptions, again according to the relevant standards. *Assumed those who sought to do evil deeds that We will make them equal with those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality? Are their living and dying equal? How evil is the judgment they give!* (45:21)

A Quranic thinker's assumptions may be stated clearly or unclearly; the assumptions may be justifiable or unjustifiable, crucial or extraneous, consistent or contradictory. The feedback students receive from teachers on their ability to meet the relevant standards will be a large factor in the improvement of the Quranic student reasoning. *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while God knows not those who struggled among you and knows the ones who remain steadfast?* (3:142)

Assumptions usually operate at the subconscious or unconscious level of thought. Assumptions should be justified by sound evidence. *Assumes the human being that We will never gather his bones? Yea! We are ones who have power to shape his fingers again. Nay! The human being wants to act immorally in front of him. He asks: When is this Day of Resurrection? But when their sight will be astonished and the moon will cause the earth to be swallowed and the sun and the moon will be gathered, the human being will say on that Day: Where is a place to run away to?* (75:3-75:10) ]

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts and their conspiring secretly? Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I frequently evaluated my listening.
I actively listening for main points.
I was able to summarize what my instructor said in my own words.
I was able to elaborate what is meant by key terms.

## Lesson 113(3). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating Implications, Consequences

**What are implications?**

Implications follow from our thoughts.

**What are consequences?**

Consequences follow from our actions.

**Reasoning Well**

The ability to reason well is measured in part by an ability to understand and enunciate the implications and, then, the consequences of the reasoning. For example: I think this or that. What does this thought imply? What would be the consequences if I were to act upon that thought?

**Implications in Reasoning**

When you spell out the implications of your reasoning:

Have you succeeded in identifying significant and realistic implications?

Have you confined yourselves to unimportant and unrealistic ones?

Have you enunciated the implications of your views clearly and precisely enough to permit your thinking to be evaluated by the validity of those implications?

Can you trace the implications and consequences that come from your reasoning?

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

### Signs 9:17-9:24

**Madinah:** *It had not been for the ones who are idol worshippers*
*to frequent the places of prostration to God*
*while they are ones who bear witness*
*against themselves of their ingratitude.*
*Those, their actions were fruitless.*
*They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever!* (9:17)
*Only he frequents places of prostration to God*
*who believed in God and the Last Day*
*and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms*
*and dreads none but God.*
*Perhaps those will be among the ones who are truly guided.* (9:18
*Made you the giving of water to drink to the ones who are pilgrims*
*and frequenting the Masjid al-Haram*
*the same as he who believed in God and the Last Day*
*and struggled in the way of God?*

*They are not on the same level with God.*
*And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* (9:19)
*Those who believed and emigrated*
*and struggled in the way of God*
*with their wealth and their lives*
*are sublime in their degree with God.*
*And those, they are the ones who are victorious.* (9:20)
*Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy from Him*
*and His contentment and of Gardens for them*
*in which is abiding bliss.* (9:21)
*They are ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.*
*Truly, God, with Him is a sublime compensation.* (9:22)
*O those who believed! Take not to yourselves your fathers*
*and brothers/sisters as protectors*
*if they embraced disbelief instead of belief.*
*And whoever of you turns away to them,*
*then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* (9:23)
*Say: If had been your fathers and your children*
*and your brothers/sisters and your spouses*
*and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained*
*and the transactions you dread slacken*
*and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased*
*were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger*
*and struggling in His Way,*
*then, await until God brings His command.*
*And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey.* (9:24)

## COMMENTARY°

### WHO MAY TEND GOD'S HOUSES

*It had not been for the ones who are polytheists to frequent the places of prostration to God while they are ones who bear witness against themselves of their ingratitude.* **(9:17)** It is totally wrong that this should ever happen because it is contrary to the nature of things. God's houses of worship belong to Him alone, and only His name should be glorified in them. No other name should be invoked beside His name. How could it be acceptable then that those who associate partners with Him should ever tend these houses of worship when they are self- confessed ungrateful. *Those, their actions were fruitless.* **(9:17)** Whatever they do is without value, including their tending of the Kabah, the Inviolable House of Worship. That is because none of their actions is based on the fundamental principle of God's oneness. As a result of their open and clear rejection of the truth of faith: *They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever!* **(9:17)**

Worship is simply an expression of faith. If the faith is wrongly based, then the worship offered on its basis is wrong as well. Therefore any act of worship, including the visiting and tending of the houses of worship, is of little benefit unless hearts are full of faith which translates itself into action that is totally dedicated to God alone. *Only he frequents places of prostration to God who believed in God and the Last Day and performed the formal prayer and gave the purifying alms and dreads none but God.* **(9:18)** We note that the two conditions relating to belief and action are coupled with a third stipulating that those believers who do good deeds must fear none other than God. This is not an idle condition. It is important that a believer should be totally dedicated to God alone and should rid himself of all traces of idolatry in his feelings, beliefs and behavior. To fear anyone beside God is a subtle aspect of polytheism. Therefore the Chapter warns against it specifically so that believers may make sure that their faith is pure and that their actions are intended to earn God's pleasure. When they do that they deserve to tend houses of worship and to be graced with God's guidance: *Perhaps those will be among the ones who are truly guided.* **(9:18)**

First, concepts are formulated and beliefs are held, then action is undertaken on the basis of faith. God will then reward people with His guidance and with success and prosperity.

This is a criterion which God states clearly to the believers and ungrateful alike, because it determines who may tend God's houses and provides a basis for the evaluation of actions of worship and rituals. Those who tended the Kabah and provided drinking water for pilgrims in pre-the Quranic days when their faith was not based on submission to God alone cannot be placed in the same position as those who have accepted the divine faith and striven hard for God's cause to help make His word supreme: *Made you the giving of water to drink to the ones who are pilgrims and frequenting the Masjid al-Haram the same as he who believed in God and the Last Day and struggled in the way of God? They are not on the same level with God. And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* **(9:19)** It is God's scale and His measure that are the important ones.

Nothing else is of any value. *And God guides not the folk, ones who are unjust.* **(9:19)** The unjust meant here are the idolaters who reject the true faith, even though they may tend and maintain the Kabah, the Sacred Mosque, and provide drinking water for pilgrims. The point here is concluded with a statement which speaks of the high position of those believers who strive hard to make God's word triumph. We are also told of the eternal bliss and great reward that await them: **(9:20-9:22)**

It should be pointed out here that the comparative stated in this sign, "stand higher in rank with God," does not imply two positions on the same scale, or that the others have a lesser rank with God. It indicates an absolute preference. We have already been told about the others, i.e. the idolaters, and that *Those, their actions were fruitless. They are ones who will dwell in the fire forever!* **(9:17)** Therefore the two situations cannot be compared.

The Chapter continues to stress the need to purge feelings and relations within the Muslim community of any influence other than that of faith. It calls on the believers to give no importance to ties of kinship or to other interests. It groups together all worldly pleasures as well as family and social ties in order to weigh them against loving God and His Messenger and striving for His cause. The choice is then left to Muslims to make: **(9:23-9:24)**

### ATTITUDES SHAPED BY FEELINGS

*O those who believed! Take not to yourselves your fathers and brothers/sisters as protectors if they embraced disbelief instead of belief.* **(9:23)** All ties of blood and family relations are severed if the tie of belief does not take its place in people's hearts. Family loyalty is nullified when loyalty based on faith is nonexistent. The first bond is that which exists between the human being and God. It is the bond which unites all humanity. When this is severed, no relationships, ties or bonds may exist. *And whoever of you turns away to them, then, those, they are the ones who are unjust.* **(9:23)** The term wrongdoers' here means the idolaters, because to maintain ties of loyalty and alliance with family and community when they prefer unbelief to faith is a form of idolatry which believers may not entertain.

The Chapter does not merely state the principle. It goes on to list all types of ties, ambitions and pleasures, grouping them all together and putting them in the scale against faith and its requirements. Thus we have in the first group fathers, children, brothers, spouses and clan (i.e. ties of blood and family), property and business (i.e. the natural desire to have money), and comfortable houses and dwellings (i.e. the pleasures of affluence). Against all this is placed love of God and His Messenger and striving for God's cause. It is important to realize that striving here implies a great deal of hardship and sacrifice. It may mean suffering oppression, going to war and sacrificing one's life altogether. Moreover, all this striving must be purged of any desire to be known or to be publicly appreciated or recognized. Once this striving aims at such recognition, it earns no reward from God.

*Say: If had been your fathers and your children and your broth-*

*ers/sisters and your spouses and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained and the transactions you dread slacken and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then, await until God brings His command. And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey.* **(9:24)** What is required here is certainly hard, and it is certainly of great importance. But thus are God's requirements. Otherwise, *await until God brings His command.* **(9:24)** The only alternative is to have the same fate as those who perpetrate evil: *And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey.* **(9:24)** This requirement is not obligatory merely on individuals. The whole Muslim community, and indeed the Muslim state, are also required to make the same choice. There is no consideration or bond which may have priority over those of faith and the struggle for God's cause.

God does not impose this obligation on the Muslim community unless He knows that its nature can cope with it. It is indeed an aspect of God's grace that He has given human nature this strong ability to cope with great demands when motivated by dedication to a noble ideal. Indeed He has given it the ability to feel a more sublime pleasure which is far superior to all the pleasures of this world. This is the pleasure or the ecstasy of having a tie with God Himself and the hope of winning His pleasure. It is also the pleasure of rising above human weaknesses, family and social pressures while looking forward to a bright horizon. If human weakness sometimes pulls us down, the bright horizon that looms large will give us a renewed desire to break loose of all worldly pressures to give faith its due importance.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Ask:

On what evidence is my conclusion based?
Where did I get the evidence?
How could I find out what other evidence exists?
What evidence supports opposing views?
Is the evidence sufficient or do I need more?
Is there reason to question this evidence?

What makes it questionable? Acceptable?
Does another view account for this evidence?

How would your rate yourself? Ask yourself:
Do I talk about what I have not yet done?
Why do I do so?
What evidence do I have?

## Lesson 113(4). Critical Thinking Strategy Generating or Assessing Solutions

Quranic critical thinkers ask questions to reach solutions. They try to find the best solution they can by evaluating solutions through comparing them to each other. Thus, it is not an evaluation independent of the various issues, but by comparing the various possibilities. They are not hasty. They examine a problem or issue at length. Quranic thinkers are also known as creative thinkers, thinkers who generate various possible solutions in order to find the best one. It may be that an issue or problem persists because the best possible answer has not as yet been found. As a result, Quranic creative thinkers use all the information that the Quranic signs give them relevant to that particular issue or problem. Solutions are implied in many of the implications that the Quranic signs give. Once students become familiar with the implications present in various Quranic signs, they develop a certain flexibility and imagination in trying to solve problems even going so far as trying new types of solutions. As Quranic creative thinkers they are fair-minded. They take the interests of others into account when generating solutions. They are realistic in their approach not seeking a solution that they want, but finding the best solution possible.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

### Signs 9:25-9:29

**Madinah:** *God, certainly, helped you in many battlefields*
*and on the day of Hunayn*
*when you were impressed with your great numbers,*
*but it avails you not at all.*
*And the earth was narrow for you for all its breadth.*
*Again, you turned as ones who draw back.* (9:25)
*Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger*
*and on the ones who believed and caused armies you see not*
*to descend and punished those who were ungrateful.*
*And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful.* (9:26)
*Again, God will turn to whom He will in forgiveness after that.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (9:27)
*O those who believed!*
*Truly, the ones who are idol worshippers are unclean,*
*so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year.*
*And if you feared being poverty-stricken,*
*God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed.*
*Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:28)
*Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day*
*nor forbid what God and His Messenger forbade*

*nor practice the way of life of The Truth*
*among those who were given the Book*
*until they give the tribute out of hand*
*and they be ones who comply.* (9:29)

## COMMENTARY°

### LARGE FORCES AVAIL NOTHING

Hunayn was the battle in which the Muslims had for the first time an army which was 12,000 strong. They felt confident when they looked at their numbers. They overlooked the most essential cause of victory. So God allowed defeat to befall them at first so that they might remember. He then granted them victory at the hands of the small group which remained steadfast with the Messenger and defended him with all the bravery they could muster. The Chapter portrays some scenes of the battle in order to recall the feelings experienced by those who were on the battlefield: *God, certainly, helped you in many battlefields and on the day of Hunayn when you were impressed with your great numbers, but it avails you not at all. And the earth was narrow for you for all its breadth. Again, you turned as ones who draw back.* **(9:25)**

This describes how the excessive confidence felt by a large force led to spiritual defeat causing the Muslims to feel such a heavy burden that made the vast earth seem too narrow. This then led to a physical defeat and those large forces were on the retreat. But what happened next?

*Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger and on the ones who believed..* **(9:26)** This inner peace' seems as if it were a garment which people wore to pacify their feelings and give them tranquillity. *and caused armies you see not to descend and punished those who were ungrateful.* **(9:26)** We do not know the nature of these forces and whom they really were. No one other than God Himself knows what forces He may bring in. *And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful.* **(9:26)** The killing of some of their soldiers and taking others captive, and the defeat that befell them all were part of the punishment they received in this life, which is only a fitting reward for their denial of God and rejection of the faith. However, the door to repentance is always open to receive those who wish to mend their ways. *Again, God will turn to whom He will in forgiveness after that. And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:27)**

The Chapter refers to the Battle of Hunayn in order to portray the consequences of turning away from God and relying on any power other than His. The events of the battle, however, highlight

the real forces on which every faith should rely. Numerical strength is of little importance. Power lies with the hard core who are totally dedicated to their faith and cannot be shaken. Sometimes the multitude may cause defeat, because some people may join in without really knowing the truth of the faith they profess. At times of hardship, courage deserts them and this may lead to confusion within the ranks of believers. Besides, large numbers may lead to a feeling of complacency which causes people to overlook the need to strengthen their ties with their Lord. The triumph of faith has always come about through the efforts of the hard core of firm believers who are ready to sacrifice all for their faith.

At this point the Chapter concludes its statement on the ungrateful who associate partners with God and gives its final verdict concerning them. This verdict remains valid for the rest of time: *O those who believed! Truly, the ones who are polytheists are unclean, so let them come not near the Masjid al-Haram after this year.* **(9:28)**

The Chapter emphasizes the abstract impurity of the idolaters to make it their essential quality. This shows them to be totally and completely impure. This statement gives the feeling that we should seek to purify ourselves when we have anything to do with them, although their impurity is abstract. Their bodies are not really impure. In its unique style, the Quran often resorts to magnification, giving abstract matters a physical shape and entity. *And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed. Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)** Here we have the strictest injunction prohibiting their presence in the Haram area. The order implies that they must not even come near it, because they are impure while the Haram is a source of purity.

The whole commercial season which the people of Makkah await every year, and their business which provides livelihood for most people and the two business trips in summer and winter which are so essential for the continued prosperity of the people of Makkah will all be jeopardized as a result of banning the idolaters from pilgrimage and declaring jihad against them all. This may be true, but when it comes to faith, God wants people's hearts to be totally dedicated to their faith. When they do this, they will not worry about their livelihood, because God ensures that everyone gets his or her share in the normal way and through recognized means: *And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed.* **(9:28)** When God wills, He may replace certain causes with others, and He may close certain doors in order to open others. *Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)** He manages all matters and conducts all affairs in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom.

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The whole commercial season which the people of Makkah await every year, and their business which provides livelihood for most people and the two business trips in summer and winter which are so essential for the continued prosperity of the people of Makkah will all be jeopardized as a result of banning the idolaters from pilgrimage and declaring jihad against them all. This may be true, but when it comes to faith, God wants people's hearts to be totally dedicated to their faith. When they do this, they will not worry about their livelihood, because God ensures that everyone gets his or her share in the normal way and through recognized means: *And if you feared being poverty-stricken, God will enrich you out of His grace if He willed.* **(9:28)** When God wills, He may replace certain causes with others, and He may close certain doors in order to open others. *Truly, God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:28)** He manages all matters and conducts all affairs in accordance with His knowledge and wisdom.

In this Chapter the Quran is addressing the Muslim community as it was composed immediately after the conquest of Makkah, when standards of faith were not at the same level. We can see from reading the Chapter carefully that there were gaps in that community, and we can also see how the Quran has set about filling these gaps and the great effort made to educate the Muslim community.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Try to answer the following questions based on the signs you have just studied:

What other solutions can you think of?
What are their advantages and disadvantages?
Are we missing any relevant facts?
Is there anything we need to find out before we can decide which solution is best?
What are the criteria for judging solutions in this case?
How will we know if a solution is a good one?
Why do people/have people behaved in the ways that cause the problem?
Can you think of other cases of this problem or similar problems?
How did the people involved try to solve them?
What results did that have?
Could we use the same solution, or is our case different in an important way?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

### ASK YOURSELF:

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you; do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?

Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

## LESSON 113(5). CRITICAL THINKING STRATEGY
## EXPLORING IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Critical thinkers can take statements, recognize their implications (i.e., if x is true, then y must also be true) and develop a fuller, more complete understanding of their meaning. They realize that to accept a statement one must also accept its implications. They can explore both implications and consequences at length. When considering beliefs that relate to actions or policies. critical thinkers assess the consequences of acting on those beliefs.

## CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
## SIGNS 9:30-9:37

**Madinah:** *And the Jews said: Ezra is the son of God*
*and the Christians said: The Messiah is the son of God.*
*That is the saying with their mouths.*
*They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful*
*before. God took the offensive.*
*How they are mislead!* (9:30)
*They took to themselves their learned Jewish scholars*
*and their monks as lords—other than God—*
*and the Messiah son of Mary.*
*And they were only commanded to worship The One God.*
*There is no god but He!*
*Glory be to Him above the partners they ascribe!* (9:31)
*They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths,*
*but God refuses so that He fulfill His light*
*even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* (9:32)
*It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance*
*and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it*
*over all ways of life,*
*even if the ones who are idol worshippers disliked it.* (9:33)
*O those who believed!*
*Truly, there are many of the learned Jewish scholars*
*and monks who consume the wealth of humanity in falsehood*
*and bar from the way of God*
*and those who treasure up gold and silver*
*and spend it not in the way of God.*
*Give to them tidings of a painful punishment,* (9:34)
*on a Day it will be hot in the fire of hell.*
*Then, by it are branded their foreheads*
*and their sides and their backs.*
*It will be said: This is what you treasured up for yourselves*
*so experience what you had been treasuring up.* (9:35)

*Truly, the period of months with God is twelve lunar months*
*in the Book of God.*
*On the day when He created the heavens and the earth of them.*
*Four are sanctified.*
*That is the truth-loving way of life.*
*So do not wrong yourselves in it.*
*And fight the ones who are idol worshippers collectively,*
*as they fight you collectively.*
*And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* (9:36)
*Truly, the postponing a Sacred Month is an increase in ingratitude.*
*By it are caused to go astray those who were ungrateful,*
*for they permit it a year, and forbid it a year,*
*so that they agree with the period that God forbade,*
*and they permit what God forbade.*
*Made to appear pleasing to them was the evil of their actions.*
*And God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* (9:37)

## COMMENTARY°

### CLEAR ORDER AND PERVERSE RESPONSE

Commenting on the assertions by the Jews and the Christians that Ezra or Jesus is the son of God, the Quran emphasizes that they echo the assertions and concepts of ungrateful in former times: *And the Jews said: Ezra is the son of God and the Christians said: The Messiah is the son of God. That is the saying with their mouths.* **(9:30)** First of all this comment emphasizes that these assertions were made by them and not reported by others. This is the reason for mentioning their mouths' to add a physical image, following the Quranic method of expression. It is evident that whatever they say or assert must be said by word of mouth. The deliberate mention of their mouths is neither redundant—far be it from God to unnecessarily add what is redundant—nor does it make the statement verbose. The Quranic style pictures how they make their assertions and gives us a very real image that we can see as we listen to the statement. There is also an additional connotation stressing that the words do not describe any thing that exists in reality. These are merely words uttered and have no real significance.

Then we have another aspect of the uniqueness of the Quran which points to its origin and that it is God's revelation. This we find in the statement: *They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful before. God took the offensive. How they are mislead!* **(9:30)** Commentators on the Quran used to say that this means that their assertions about God having a son are similar to what the Arab idolaters used to say that the angels were God's daughters. The sim-

ilarity between the two assertions is true, but this statement has a wider implication which has transpired only recently when the faiths of idolaters in India, ancient Egypt and Greece were studied.

A careful look at the ideologies of the ancient idolaters, which were not known to people at the time when the Quran was revealed, in the light of this Quranic statement: *They conform with the sayings of those who were ungrateful before.* **(9:30)** will prove two points. It shows that the people of earlier revelations do not follow the faith of truth and do not have the right concepts of God. It also reveals a certain aspect of the uniqueness of the Quran, pointing to its source and that it is revealed by God whose knowledge is perfect, absolute.

This sign, which makes it clear that the people of earlier revelations have adopted idolatrous beliefs, is concluded with these words: *God took the offensive. How they are mislead!* **(9:30)** Yes indeed. "May God destroy them!" How they overlook the simple truth which is clear and straightforward to adopt ambiguous and complex idolatrous concepts which have no logical or coherent basis.

The Chapter then describes another type of deviation from the truth manifested by the people of earlier revelations. This time the deviation is not confined to verbal statements and beliefs only; it translates itself into practices based on erroneous beliefs: *They took to themselves their learned Jewish scholars and their monks as lords—other than God—and the Messiah son of Mary. And they were only commanded to worship The One God. There is no god but He! Glory be to Him above the partners they ascribe!* **(9:31)**

This sign comes at its most appropriate place in this passage which dispels all lingering doubts that those people may still be following a divine faith. For this sign states that they are no longer following any religion revealed by God. This is proven by their beliefs and practices. They were ordered to worship God alone, but they took their rabbis and monks as lords besides God. All this is a form of idolatry which associates partners with God.

### A TRUE PROMISE

The Chapter goes a step further in encouraging the believers to fight: **(9:32-9:33)** The people of earlier revelations do not stop at mere deviation from the religion of truth and worshipping lords and other beings instead of God, as well as refusing to believe in God and the Last Day in the true sense of such a belief. They go further by declaring war against the religion of truth and trying hard to extinguish God's light, represented by this religion, the movement advocating it and the system it provides for human life.

*They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths.*

**(9:32)** So, they are hostile to God's light, trying to prevent its spread. They fabricate lies and sew the seeds of discord and division. They also mobilize their followers to stand in opposition to this religion and its followers, as was the case when these signs were revealed. This has continued to be the case ever since. Although this statement aimed primarily at enhancing the determination of the Muslims at the time, it also describes the true nature of the attitude the people of earlier revelations always adopt towards God's light as reflected by His true faith providing guidance for humanity.

*But God refuses so that He fulfill His light even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(9:32)** This is a true promise by God reflecting His permanent law which ensures that His light will always be perfected and that His religion will always prevail in spite of the ungrateful' attempts to stifle it. This promise will reassure the believers and motivate them to continue along their way, full as it may be with hardships, and to stand up to all the wicked scheming of the ungrateful. In this instance, the term ungrateful refers to those people who were given Scriptures in former times. The promise also implies a clear threat to those ungrateful and all who follow in their footsteps.

The Chapter re-emphasizes the promise and the threat at the same time: *It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* **(9:33)**

It is clear from this statement that the religion of the Quranic message, preached by God's last Messenger, is the one to which reference is made in the previous Quranic statement: *Fight those who believe not in God nor the Last Day nor forbid what God and His Messenger forbade nor practice the way of life of The Truth among those who were given the Book until they give the tribute out of hand and they be ones who comply.* **(9:29)** It is also clear that this order to fight is targeted against those who do not believe in this religion.

*It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* **(9:33)** This statement confirms God's first promise: *They want to extinguish the light of God with their mouths, but God refuses so that He fulfill His light even if the ones who are ungrateful disliked it.* **(9:32)** The confirmation, however, takes a much more specific form. The light which God, who is limitless in His glory, has decided to bring to full perfection is the religion of truth with which He has sent His last Messenger so that He may cause it to prevail over all other religions.

**HOARDING GOLD AND SILVER**

This last step in exposing the reality of those people of earlier revelations who have distorted God's message is given in two signs addressed to the believers: **(9:34-9:35)**

The first sign elaborates on the roles of the rabbis and monks whom those people of earlier revelations have made as lords, following their bidding in their day-to-day transactions, and also in their worship. **(9:34-9:35)** The scene is portrayed in full detail, with the whole operation described from its first step to its conclusion. Thus the scene is deliberately made to linger in our minds so that we contemplate it longer.

The description starts with a general statement: *O those who believed! Truly, there are many of the learned Jewish scholars and monks who consume the wealth of humanity in falsehood and bar from the way of God and those who treasure up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God. Give to them tidings of a painful punishment,* **(9:34)** The sign ends here with a general reference to the punishment of the hereafter. But then the full details are given: *On a Day it will be hot in the fire of hell. Then, by it are branded their foreheads and their sides and their backs. .* **(9:35)**

As we listen we wait for the heating up to be completed, then we see it red hot and gathered in readiness. Now the suffering starts with foreheads being branded with all that gold and silver. When all foreheads have been branded, those who are being punished are made to turn on their sides so that they can be branded there as well. With that over, they are made to turn yet again in order to brand them a third time with the red hot gold and silver on their backs. When this type of their punishment is completed, they are severely rebuked: *Those who treasure up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of God, give to them tidings of a painful punishment,* **(9:35)** It is the very thing you were keen to have and keep for your pleasure and enjoyment. It is now a means to inflict on you this grievous suffering: *It will be said: This is what you treasured up for yourselves so experience what you had been treasuring up.* **(9:35)** Taste it in reality, because it is the very thing which is branding your foreheads, sides and backs.

### CHANGING THE ORDER OF TIME

*Truly, the period of months with God is twelve lunar months in the Book of God. On the day when He created the heavens and the earth of them. Four are sanctified. That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it. And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:36)**

This Quranic statement refers the origin of time and the way it runs to the nature of the universe and how God created it, and to the origin of creation of both the heavens and the earth. It tells us that there is a permanent cycle of time consisting of twelve months. That it is permanent is evident from the fact that in every cycle there are twelve months. This is included in God's decree, which means that it is part of the divine law for the universe. Therefore, the cycle is permanent and the months are twelve, without any possibility of increase or decrease. Its movement is in accordance with the divine law set into operation when God created the heavens and the earth.

The reference to the fact that this time cycle is permanent serves as a prelude to making certain months sacred. Their selection and sanctity is part of God's decree or His law which cannot be changed at will. It simply cannot be made subject to people's desires who may wish to bring one month forward and put another back. Its permanence is similar to that of the seasons which follow one another according to a constant law: *That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it.* **(9:36)** This religion is, then, in perfect harmony with the law which governs the creation of the heavens and the earth and their functions.

All this about the number of months and those of them which are sacred is *That is the truth-loving way of life. So do not wrong yourselves in it.* **(9:36)** You should not wrong yourselves in these four sacred months, the sanctity of which relates to a law of nature which applies to the whole universe. This law makes it clear that God is the Legislator in human life and in the universe at large. Do not wrong yourselves by violating the sanctity of these months which God has willed to be a period of peace and security for all. Whenever human beings violate God's rules they wrong themselves because they actually expose themselves to punishment in the life to come and to fear and worry in this life when all months become a period of war without intermission.

*And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:36)** This obviously applies throughout the rest of the year, not in the sacred months, except when the ungrateful launch an attack, in which case the Muslims must repel the aggression in these months. To take a unilateral decision not to fight will weaken the forces of goodness which are required to defend sanctities and repel aggression by forces of evil. It will also lead to the spread of corruption in the land and the disruption of the laws of nature. Repelling aggression in the sacred months is a means to preserve their sanctity and prevent their violation.

*And fight the ones who are polytheists collectively, as they fight you collectively.* **(9:36)** Fight them all without exception, because they do not make any exception of any single person or community when they fight you. The battle is truly between idolatry and believing in God's oneness, between proper guidance and going astray. It is a battle between two clearly distinguished camps which cannot come to a complete agreement or make permanent peace because the differences between them are not over details or over conflicting interests where a compromise could be worked out, or over borders which may be demarcated anew. The Muslim community would be deluded if it believes, or is led to understand, that its battle with the idolaters, whether pagan or people who had distorted their Scriptures, is over issues of politics or economics, national independence or strategy. It is first of all an ideological battle, and it is over the system laid down by this ideology, which means religion. Such a battle cannot be sorted out by compromises worked out through negotiations. It is sorted out only by jihad and dedicated struggle. This is God's law which never changes, and over which the whole universal system is founded. It is the law at the core of the divine faith and which controls the operation of conscience. It has been set in operation on the day when God created the heavens and the earth.

*And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious* .**(9:36)** Those who fear to violate God's sanctities or to make lawful what He has forbidden, or to disrupt His laws are the ones who will be granted victory. Muslims then must never hesitate to fight the ungrateful all together, or fear to engage in an all-out campaign of jihad. Theirs is a campaign of struggle for God's cause, in which they do not violate its rules or moral standards. They dedicate their struggle to God and watch Him when they are alone as much as they do when they are with other people. Victory is theirs because God is with them, and whoever is on God's side shall certainly be victorious.

### A CHANGE NOT SANCTIONED BY GOD

In this act **(9:37)** which is described as an 'excess of unbelief,' *Truly, the postponing a Sacred Month is an increase in ingratitude.* **(9:37)** They actually deceive themselves with their ploys and tricks. *By it are caused to go astray those who were ungrateful, for they permit it a year, and forbid it a year, so that they agree with the period that God forbade, and they permit what God forbade.* **(9:37)** They see as fair what is evil and they think deviation from the truth to be a virtue. They are totally unaware of how far astray they have gone and to what depths of unbelief they have sunk.

*Made to appear pleasing to them was the evil of their actions.*

*And God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:37)** They have placed a shield between their hearts and divine guidance. Therefore God abandons them to their unbelief in which they live in total darkness, far removed from God's guidance.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions,** (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Are you able to write a DBQ (Document Based Question) to examine a point of view of the Quranic signs you have just studied using an analytical tool called SOAPS?

S = subject: What is the Quranic sign about (make it brief, one sentence)

O = occasion: What is going on at the time?

A = audience: To whom is it addressed?

P = purpose: What is the purpose of the Quranic sign?

S = speaker: Who is the speaker? Give some information about this person.

### HOW WOULD YOU EVALUATE YOURSELF AT THIS POINT? I AM AT:•

Stage One: The Unreflective Thinker unaware of significant problems in my thinking)

Stage Two: The Challenged Thinker aware of problems in my thinking

Stage Three: The Beginning Thinker trying to improve but without regular practice

Stage Four: The Practicing Thinker who recognizes the necessity of regular practice

Stage Five: The Advanced Thinker who knows I advance in accordance with my practice

Stage Six: The Master Thinker: skilled and insightful thinking has become second nature to me

## LESSON 113(6). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)

The greatest emphasis in the Quran is on the Oneness or Unity of God (*tawhid*, monotheism) which implies belief that God is One. He created the universe and all that is in it and that at every moment there is a new creation. *Were We wearied by the first creation? No! They are perplexed about a new creation.* (50:15) He created moral order among us where we are judged according to the merit of our deeds: *Whoever does the weight of an atom of good will see it. Whoever does the weight of an atom of the worst will see it.* (99:7-99:8)

**We are not judged arbitrarily**: *Know that God will never be One Who Causes to Change a divine blessing when He was gracious to a folk unless they first change what is within themselves. And, truly, God is Hearing, Knowing.* (8:53)

**This moral order** works without any favor, not only in the case of individuals, but also in the case of societies and peoples: *Mention when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Remember the divine blessing of God on you when He assigned Prophets among you and assigned kings and gives you what He gave not to anyone of the worlds.* (5:20)

**God has entered into covenant** with human beings within the limits of this moral order with people as such and not with particular nations or races: *O those who believed! Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you hate a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness (taqwa). Be God-conscious of God. Truly, God is Aware of what you do.* (5:8)

**Reason**: First of all, our proof of our belief ultimately depends upon our ability to reason. Without reason, we would not be able to understand the Quranic signs nor respond to their message. The connection between faith and reason is the key to our Quranic critical thinking. It is through this connection that our thoughts and emotions grow into a harmony with each other. The Quran repeatedly asks us to think about the signs of God in the universe and within ourselves, to understand God's presence within us and in the universe, and ultimately to find the truth. The concept of the Quranic signs seeks creates a dynamic relationship between revelation and reason: *It is a blessed Book that We caused to descend to you, so that they meditate on its signs and those who have intuition recollect.* (38:29)

**Good deeds**: Proof that we believe in the One God (unity) is through competing with one another in good deeds, (3:114; 23:61) *Do good. Truly God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) *And among the good deeds is to obey God and to obey the Messenger.* (5:92) Note that 5:92 commands us to obey God and to obey the Messenger. It does not say: obey God and obey Muhammad as a Messenger was sent to many different communities.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:38-9:42

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*What was it with you when was said to you:*
*Move forward in the way of God,*
*you inclined heavily downwards to the earth?*
*Were you so well-pleased with this present life*
*instead of the world to come?*
*But the enjoyment of this present life*
*is not but little compared to the world to come.* (9:38)
*Unless you move forward, He will punish you*
*with a painful punishment and will have in exchange for you*
*a folk other than you.*
*And you will not injure Him at all.*
*And God is Powerful over everything.* (9:39)
*If you help him not, then, surely,*
*God helped him when those who were ungrateful drove him out.*
*The second of two, when they were both in the cavern,*
*he says to his companion: Feel no remorse.*
*Truly, God is with us.*
*Then, God caused His tranquility to descend on him*
*and confirmed him with armies that you see not*
*and made the word of those who were ungrateful the lowest.*
*And the Word of God is Lofty. God is Almighty, Wise.* (9:40)
*Move forward light and heavy and struggle with your wealth*
*and your lives in the way of God.*
*That is better for you if you had been knowing.* (9:41
*If it had been a near advantage and an easy journey,*
*they would have followed* ***you****, except the destination of the journey*
*was distant for them.*
*And they will swear by God: If we were able,*
*we would, certainly, have gone forth with you.*
*They will cause themselves to perish.*
*And God knows that they are the ones who lie.* (9:42)

### Commentary°

*O those who believed! What was it with you when was said to you: Move forward in the way of God, you inclined heavily downwards to the earth?* **(9:38)**

Such reluctance to march forth in support of God's cause is only motivated by worldly considerations and ambitions. People may fear for their lives and their property. They are keen to protect their interests and preserve their pleasures, and would prefer a settled life of

ease and comfort. They think primarily of their present life, immediate objectives, close relatives and physical needs. The words chosen here give a vivid impression of "clinging heavily to the earth". It is as if we are looking at a heavy object that has been in its position for a long time. It is lifted up by a group of people, but it soon falls down with a strong gravitational pull.

Joining a jihad campaign for God's cause represents freedom from the shackles of this earthly life and physical pleasures. It emphasizes the yearning for freedom after the shedding of narrow needs, and the expanse of eternity after getting rid of this limited worldly life: *Were you so well-pleased with this present life instead of the world to come? But the enjoyment of this present life is not but little compared to the world to come.* **(9:38)**

A stern threat then follows: *Unless you move forward, He will punish you with a painful punishment and* He *will have in exchange for you a folk other than you.* **(9:39)** who will guard their faith and who are prepared to make the necessary sacrifices without ever submitting to God's enemies. *And you will not injure Him at all. And God is Powerful over everything.* **(9:39)** He can easily cause you to perish and bring about a different community to take your place. In the final balance you will count for nothing.

To elevate oneself above the shackles of the earth and over one's own weaknesses is to enhance one's noble existence. It represents the higher meaning of life. To give in to fears for one's life and the attractions of this worldly life is to condemn one's humanity to extinction. This is the real death knell of the spiritual aspect which distinguishes human life.

### THE BEST CHOICE FOR BELIEVERS

God then gives them an example of the history which they themselves had witnessed, showing them how He supported His Messenger and gave him a great victory without need for their support. After all, victory is granted by God to whom He pleases: **(9:40)**

The Chapter describes vividly the situation of the Messenger and his friend:*If you help him not, then, surely, God helped him when those who were ungrateful drove him out. The second of two, when they were both in the cavern, he says to his companion: Feel no remorse. Truly, God is with us. Then, God caused His tranquility to descend on him and confirmed him with armies that you see not.* **(9:40)**

What was the result of this confrontation when all the material power was on one side while the Messenger and his Companion stood alone with no such power? A fantastic victory was granted,

employing troops whom no human being could see. A humiliating defeat engulfed the ungrateful: He *made the word of those who were ungrateful the lowest.* **(9:40)** God's word remained mighty, victorious, supreme: *And the Word of God is Lofty. God is Almighty, Wise.* **(9:40)** God is certainly Almighty and those who advocate His cause will never be humiliated, and He is Wise, which means here that He determines when to grant victory to those who deserve it.

They are then called upon to mobilize their forces and not to allow any impediment to stand in their way. If they wish to attain what is best for them in this life as well as in the life to come, then they should not allow any factor to interfere with their response to such a call: *Move forward light and heavy and struggle with your wealth and your lives in the way of God.* **(9:41)**

They must march whatever the circumstances, and must strive hard, and be ready to sacrifice their wealth and their lives, seeking no excuses and allowing no impediments to stand in their way: *That is better for you if you had been knowing.* **(9:41)**

### MANIFESTATIONS OF HYPOCRISY

#### DISTINGUISHING TRUE BELIEVERS FROM LIARS

At this point the Chapter speaks about certain groups that demonstrated weakness, but it reserves more space for exposing the hypocrites who pretended to believe in order to join the Muslim ranks after the Quranic message had shown its strength and looked certain to triumph. They felt it safer to bow their heads to the Quranic message so as to acquire whatever they might by way of other gain. Simultaneously, and with open hostility no longer feasible, they could also undermine the Muslim community from within.

The first thing highlighted here **(9:42)** is that had the situation involved the prospect of immediate gain or the undertaking of a short journey, which represented no serious risk, they would have joined the Messenger. But the undertaking was not an easy one. The destination was much too far for those with a weak resolve and a frail aptitude for glory. The effort required was not for those with weak hearts. People were called upon to rise to a great occasion, one which would prove their metal. Therefore we find in the community a type of people that we encounter across all generations: *If it had been a near advantage and an easy journey, they would have followed you, except the destination of the journey was distant for them.* **(9:42)**

*And they will swear by God: If we were able, we would, certainly, have gone forth with you.* **(9:42)** Lying goes hand in hand with cowardice and weakness. Only the weak and faint- hearted resort to lies, even though they may occasionally appear to command consid-

erable power. A strong person will not hesitate to face any eventuality head on, while the weak will always remain evasive. It is a rule that never fails. *They will cause themselves to perish.* **(9:42)** They certainly ruin themselves by their false swearing which they imagine will save them in the eyes of other people. However, God knows the truth and He reveals it to humanity. Thus the liar is ruined in this life by the effects of his falsehood and he ruins himself in the hereafter when he cannot deny his true motives before God, because *God knows that they are the ones who lie.* **(9:42)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

### WHAT IS ACTIVE QURANIC LISTENING?

Model active listening to responses by summarizing in your own words the content or gist of their answers.
Expand on the exercise by calling on classmates to do same.
Take time for thought processing in answering.
Create the pause for a thoughtful response rather than expect an immediate reply.
Allow for unexpected turns that suit the purpose and invite gestalt!
Use shock or disruption to shake up a rather boring experience.
Work in small group exercises modeled on questioning.
Merge to incrementally larger groups.
Give report from merged group.
Provide for peer feedback and class discussion.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I realized that I sometimes think with a bias in favor of myself.
I realized I sometimes become irritable over small things.
I realized that I have sometimes said something 'irrational' to get my way.
I realized I have sometimes tried to impose my will upon others

## LESSON 113(7). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)

The Quran is revealed to produce this attitude of God-consciousness among people: *an Arabic Recitation without any crookedness so that perhaps they would be God-conscious.* (39:28) It is the presence of this moral attitude which saves people from destruction (27:53; 41:18) and it is this which helps them maintain God's commands in their conjugal life, (2:24; 4:129) in sacrifice, (5:30; 22:37) in different aspects of social life, (2:177) and in fulfilling faithfully their social obligations. (25:63-25:74)

To be God-conscious (*muttaqi*) (to guard against evil) is to exhibit virtuous conduct: *It is not virtuous conduct that you turn your faces towards the East or the West. Rather virtuous conduct consists of: Whoever believes in God and the Last Day, and the angels, and the Book, and the Prophets. Proof of belief in the One God is in one's actions, behavior or practicing of this belief which includes, among other practices: The practice of good deeds: to spend out of one's substance, out of love for God, for kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask, for the ransom of prisoners-of-war; to be steadfast in prayers, and to pay the purifying alms* (zakat)*; to fulfill the contracts which have been made; and to be firm and patient in pain (or suffering), adversity, and times of danger. Such people as follow these are possessed of true God-consciousness.* (2:177-2:178)

The better and more lasting reward of the Lord is for those who believe and put their trust in Him; those who avoid the greater crimes and shameful deeds, and, even when they are angry, they forgive; those who hearken to their Lord, and establish regular prayer; who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation; who spend out of what God bestows on them for sustenance; who, when an oppressive wrong is inflicted on them, (are not cowed but) help and defend themselves; and those who recompense injury with injury in degree equal thereto and, better still, forgive and make reconciliation. But indeed if any do help and defend themselves after a wrong is done to them, against such there is no cause of blame. The blame is only against those who oppress people with wrongdoing and insolently transgress beyond bounds through the land, defying right and justice; for such there will be a grievous penalty. But indeed showing patience and forgiveness is an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs. God-consciousness results in developing a sense of humility.

## CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
## SIGNS 9:43-9:59

**Madinah:** *God pardon you!*
*Why had you given permission to them*
*before it becomes clear to you those who were sincere*

*and **you** have known who are the ones who lie?* (9:43)
*They ask not permission of **you**,*
*those who believe in God and the Last Day,*
*that they struggle with their wealth and their lives.*
*And God is Knowing of the ones who are God-conscious.* (9:44)
*It is only those who ask permission of **you***
*who believe not in God and the Last Day*
*and whose hearts were in doubt,*
*so they go this way and that in their doubts.* (9:45)
*And if they wanted to go forth,*
*certainly, they would have prepared for it some preparation,*
*except God disliked arousing them,*
*so He caused them to pause and it was said:*
*Sit along with the ones who sit at home.* (9:46)
*If they went forth with you,*
*they would have increased nothing for you,*
*but ruination.*
*And they would have rushed to and fro in your midst*
*with insolent dissension.*
*And among you are ones who would have harkened to them.*
*And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* (9:47)
*Certainly, they were looking for dissension before.*
*And they turned around and around for **you***
*the commands until The Truth drew near,*
*and the command of God became manifest*
*although they were ones who dislike it.* (9:48)
*Among them is he who says:*
*Give me permission and tempt me not.*
*But they descended into dissension.*
*And, truly, hell is that which*
*encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* (9:49)
*If lights on **you** benevolence, they are raised to anger,*
*but if an affliction lights on **you**, they say:*
*Surely, we took our commands before.*
*And they turn away and they are glad.* (9:50)
*Say: Nothing will light on us*
*but what God had been prescribing for us.*
*He is our Defender.*
*And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* (9:51)
*Say: Are you watching for something,*
*but one of the two fairer things to befall us?*
*And we watch for you, whether God will light on you*
*a punishment from Him or from our hands.*

*So watch! We are ones who are waiting with you.* (9:52)
*Say: Spend willingly or unwillingly.*
*There will be only non-acceptance.*
*Truly, you, you had been a folk, ones who disobey.* (9:53)
*And nothing prevented their contributions being accepted*
*from them but that they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger*
*and that they not approach formal prayer*
*but while they are lazy*
*and they spend but as ones who dislike to spend.* (9:54)
*So let not their wealth impress thee nor their children.*
*God wants only to punish them in this present life*
*and so that their souls depart*
*while they are ones who are ungrateful.* (9:55)
*And they swear by God that they are, truly,*
*of you while they are not of you.*
*They are but a folk who are in fear.* (9:56)
*If they find a shelter or a place to creep into or a place of retreat,*
*they would turn to it as they rush away.* (9:57)
*And among them there are some who find fault with you*
*about charities.*
*If they were given a part of it, they were well-pleased,*
*but if they are not given of it,*
*that is when they are displeased.* (9:58)
*Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them*
*and His Messenger.*
*And they had said: God is Enough for us.*
*God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger.*
*Truly, to God we are ones who quest.* (9:59)

COMMENTARY°

*God pardon thee! Why had you given permission to them before it becomes clear to you those who were sincere and you have known who are the ones who lie?* **(9:43)** Here we have an example of God's kindness as He begins with stating His pardon before His reproach. Those hypocrites who stayed behind were able to hide their true colors when the Messenger allowed them to stay behind after they had presented their excuses. This was a chance to expose their falsehood, because they would have stayed behind anyway, even though the Messenger would have withheld his permission. They would have been seen as they truly were, without their false guise. But since this did not happen, the Quran exposes them and states clearly the rules which distinguish the true believers from the hypocrites: **(9:44-9:45)**

The way leading to God's pleasure is straight and clearly

marked. Only a person who does not know the way, or one who knows it but tries to avoid its hardship, is reluctant to follow it. Those who stayed behind at the time of the Tabuk Expedition were able to join the army, had they wished to do so. They had all the means at their disposal. Among them were people like Abd Allah ibn Ubayy and al-Jadd ibn Qays, both of whom were rich and from among the nobility. *And if they wanted to go forth, certainly, they would have prepared for it some preparation, except God disliked arousing them, so He caused them to pause.* **(9:46)**

This is due to what He knew of their nature and their hypocrisy, as well as their ill intentions towards the believers, as we will see. Therefore, "He caused them to hold back," and did not give them the motivation to set forth with the believers. So, *it was said: Sit along with the ones who sit at home.* **(9:46)** Thus they stayed behind with the elderly, the women and the children who were not required to fight. This is the right place for faint-hearted waverers who lack faith.

However, this was certainly better for the Quranic message and the Muslims: *If they went forth with you, they would have increased nothing for you, but ruination. And they would have rushed to and fro in your midst with insolent dissension. And among you are ones who would have harkened to them.* **(9:47)**

Wavering hearts are likely to spread cowardice and reluctance to meet the enemy. Traitors are a real danger to any army. Had those hypocrites set out with the Muslim army, they would not have added to the strength of the Muslims. Indeed they would only have added chaos and trouble, and they would have scurried to and fro, sewing discord and counselling retreat. At that time, there were among the Muslims some who would listen to them, thinking them to be honest in their counsel. However, God who takes care of His message and extends His protection to those who are dedicated believers, spared the Muslims all this by letting the hypocrites stay behind:*And God is Knowing of the ones who are unjust.* **(9:47)** The description, wrongdoers, in this instance means 'the idolaters,' which in effect means that they also belong to the idolaters.

### ABSURDITY CARRIED TOO FAR

The Chapter goes on to report some of their fabricated excuses and to expose their ill intentions towards the Messenger and the Muslim community: **(9:49-9:52)** This is typical of the absurd excuses proffered by the hypocrites. What answer has the Quran for them? *Among them is he who says: Give me permission and tempt me not. But they descended into dissension. And, truly, hell is that which encloses the ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:49)** The Chapter portrays here

a scene in which temptation is shown like an abyss in which the tempted fall, and behind them stands hell ready to engulf them, blocking all openings for escape. This image suggests that they have committed an unmitigated sin and that their punishment is inevitable. It is a punishment for their falsehood, staying behind at a time of war and offering such absurd excuses. It confirms their total lack of faith, despite the fact that they were keen to pretend that they believed in God and His Messenger.

They certainly do not wish the Messenger or the Muslims well. They are grieved when the Messenger and the Muslims meet good fortune: *If lights on you benevolence, they are raised to anger.* **(9:50)** Indeed they are so happy when misfortune or a disaster befalls the believers, or when they encounter hardship: *But if an affliction lights on you, they say: Surely, we took our commands before.* **(9:50)** Thus they consider having stayed behind when the Muslims left to fight the Byzantines a wise precaution. *And they turn away and they are glad.* **(9:50)** They are so pleased that they have ensured their own safety and did not expose themselves to the hardship the Muslims endured.

Their attitude shows their superficial outlook. They consider any hardship to be evil which must be avoided at all costs. They think that they make great gain by staying behind. Their hearts are devoid of any element of submission to God and accepting His will, believing it to be for their own good. A true believer does his best, fearing no outcome, because he believes that whatever good or evil he experiences is tied to God's will, and that God will help him and grant him success: *Say: Nothing will light on us but what God had been prescribing for us. He is our Defender.* **(9:51)**

God has promised the Muslims eventual victory. Therefore whatever hardship they are made to suffer, and however hard their test appears to be, they are being prepared for their promised victory. The believers will certainly have their victory after they have passed their test. It will come by the means God has ordained so that it is treated as a valuable, not a cheap, victory. Thus the Muslims will defend their position of honor, ready to give any sacrifice for it. It is God who gives help and grants victory: *And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* **(9:51)**

It should be mentioned that a believer will only get what is good for him, whether he achieves victory or martyrdom. An ungrateful will only end up with what is evil, whether he is made to taste God's punishment directly or at the hands of the believers: *Say: Are you watching for something, but one of the two fairer things to befall us? And we watch for you, whether God will light on you a punishment*

*from Him or from our hands. So watch! We are ones who are waiting with you.* **(9:52)**

### POSSESSED BY FEAR

Some of the hypocrites who tried to stay behind, hoping to spare themselves hardship, offered to help finance the campaign. In this way, they were holding the stick in the middle, like all hypocrites do at all times. God foiled their attempt and instructed His Messenger to declare that their spending was unacceptable by God. Their offers were motivated by fear and hypocrisy, not by genuine faith. Therefore, even if the offer were made voluntarily to deceive the Muslims, or they were forced to make it for fear of being exposed for what they truly were, it was of no value. It was rejected by God and earned them no reward whatsoever: **(9:53-9:54)**

This detailed description is true of all hypocrites wherever they happen to be. They are always full of fear, sly, deviant, making pretenses that are void of all substance. They are keen to give a false impression in order to escape confrontation. The Quran describes them very accurately: *And nothing prevented their contributions being accepted from them but that they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger and that they not approach formal prayer but while they are lazy and they spend but as ones who dislike to spend.* **(9:54)** They only put up false appearances, and do not approach prayer with sincerity which would enhance their honesty. Therefore, they are reluctant when they pray, because they are forced to do it. They have no real motivation to pray, except to impress the Muslims that they belong to them, when in reality they do not. The same is the case with what they spend. It is all a question of appearances.

God does not accept such false pretenses which are not motivated by true faith. Indeed it is the motive which gives value to any action, and the intention behind it provides the standard by which it is judged.

Many of those hypocrites were people of affluence, having many children and occupying positions of nobility and honor in their tribes. All this counts for nothing with God and so it should be with His Messenger and the community of believers. Such privileges were not a bounty given to them by God to enjoy; they were only a means of trial which would ensure their punishment: *So let not their wealth impress you nor their children. God wants only to punish them in this present life and so that their souls depart while they are ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:55)**

The hypocrites tried to place themselves in the ranks of believers, not because of their faith—for they had none—but because of

fear coupled with hope and expectation. Therefore they would swear that they were believers and that they were convinced of the truth of the Quranic message. This Chapter exposes their reality. Therefore it is described as the Chapter which reveals the reality,' since it shatters falsehood and tears off the mask of hypocrisy: **(9:56-8:57)**

They are indeed cowards, and here we are presented with a very vivid picture of their cowardice. It is painted in a physical and mental sweep: *If they find a shelter or a place to creep into or a place of retreat, they would turn to it as they rush away.* **(9:57)** They will always look for a shelter, whatever it may be, a fort or a cave or even a tunnel, as long as it gives them protection from an imminent calamity. They are in terrible fear, chased by internal and spiritual cowardice. Therefore, *they swear by God that they are, truly, of you while they are not of you. They are but a folk who are in fear.* **(9:56)** using all means of emphasis and assertion in order to cover up what they harbour at heart. They only hope to ensure their safety. It is a very miserable picture of cowardly fear which only the unique style of the Quran can depict as it shows the inner feelings of hearts vividly brought before our eyes.

### CONTENTED WITH GOD'S GIFTS

Here, the Chapter exposes the true nature of both hypocrisy and the hypocrites. Their case is linked to that of the ungrateful which was discussed earlier. Those ungrateful were destroyed after having enjoyed their portion for a time. Thus the difference between them and the believers is clearly shown.. **(9:58-9:59)**

Some of the hypocrites may hurt the Messenger accusing him of injustice when it comes to the distribution of charitable donations, implying that he favors certain people. They do not say this for any love of justice, or to express their enthusiasm for the truth and the values of faith. They only make their claims for vested interests and ulterior motives: *If they were given a pare of it, they were well-pleased.* **(9:58)** They would not care then about justice, the rights of others or about religious values, because they would have had their share, and that is all that counts with them. *But if they are not given of it, that is when they are displeased* **(9:58)**

Within the same context, the Chapter outlines the attitude that befits true believers: *Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them and His Messenger. And they had said: God is Enough for us. God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger. Truly, to God we are ones who quest.* **(9:59)**

Such are the attitudes and the manners that befit true believers. They accept with complete satisfaction whatever division is made

by God and His Messenger. It is not a forced acceptance. They feel that whatever God gives them is good and sufficient, and He will certainly give His servants what will satisfy them. They hope for God's grace and bounty, and seek His pleasure with complete devotion, free from any expectation of material gain. Such are the proper manners of true believers. Of course these manners are unknown to hypocrites who have never experienced the happiness generated by faith in God and His Messenger. Never had the light of faith shined in their hearts.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### EXAMPLE OF HOW QURANIC THINKING WORKS

Quranic content is understood by thinking, organized by thinking, analyzed by thinking, synthesized by thinking, evaluated by thinking, transformed by thinking.

You will learn that the Quran teaches you HOW to think through reading it, writing it, speaking it and listening (hearing) to it in any language with which you are familiar. Of course, it is best if this is done with the original Arabic revelation, but not knowing Quranic Arabic should not stop you from learning HOW to think Quranically. It is so powerful, it should come across in any language in which it has been well translated, that is, a translation as close as possible to the original, but making sense (not a literal, word-by-word) or a wordy interpretation for each sign rather than a translation. In reading it, dialogue with it by asking yourself: What is the purpose of this passage? Do I understand what is being said? When I read these signs, I work on the text, take it apart, predict it, test it. It is a very difficult process, very labor intensive. This is close reading. What's worth reading is worth reading well.

Write out a part in your own words in order to better understand it, not, of course, to try to compete with it. Ask yourself if you can reformulate it, elaborate on it and give an example. Speak about it. To communicate well, you need to know your audience and what it is that you want to say. In order for listening (hearing) to be effective, it must be active.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with

each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I am able to raise basic issues.
I am probing beneath the surface of things.
I am discovering the structure of my own thought.
I am developing sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
I am arriving at judgments through my own reasoning.
I am learning to listen carefully to what others in my class say.
I am taking what others in my Quranic class say seriously.
I am beginning to look for reasons and evidence.
I am recognizing and reflecting on assumptions.
I am seeking examples, analogies and objections.
I am seeking to be empathetic to the Quranic point of view.
I am looking under the surface of things for the
meaning of the Quranic message.

## Lesson 113(8). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Virtuous Conduct Through Moral Discipline

Virtuous conduct, integrity or moral uprightness, the state of being whole and undivided or a sense of inner and outer unity develops through moral discipline. It produces the attitude of God-consciousness (*taqwa*) when the discipline of prayer, fasting, giving the purifying alms, and pilgrimage is practiced. People are commanded to guard strictly their habit of formal prayers and stand before God in a devout frame of mind, (2:238) to pay the purifying alms, (98:5) to spend in charity secretly and openly (25:29)—a beautiful loan to God (72:20)—a bargain that will never fail, (25:29) involving a glad tidings for the believers (22:34) and a cause of prosperity (31:5) and spiritual joy. (20:139) Those people who follow these principles are on the right path towards the moral trait of integrity under the true guidance of the Lord. (31:5; 97:5) They remove the stain of evil from the people (11:114) and help them refrain from shameful and unjust deeds. (29:45) It is the practice of all believing people that when God grants them power in the land, they enjoin the right and forbid the wrong.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:60-9:66

**Madinah:** *Charities are only for the poor and the needy*
*and the ones who work to collect it*
*and the ones whose hearts are brought together*
*and to free the bondsperson and the ones who are in debt*
*and in the way of God and for the traveler of the way.*
*This is a duty to God. And God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:60)
*And among them are those who malign the Messenger*
*and say: He is unquestioning.*
*Say: He is unquestioning of what is good for you.*
*He believes in God and believes in ones who believe.*
*And he is a mercy to those of you who believed.*
*And those of you who malign the Messenger of God,*
*for them is a painful punishment.* (9:61)
*They swear by God to you to please you,*
*but God and His Messenger have better right*
*that they should please Him*
*if they had been ones who believe.* (9:62
*Know they not that whoever opposes God and His Messenger,*
*then, truly, for him will be the fire of hell—*
*one who will dwell in it forever?*
*That is the tremendous degradation.* (9:63)
*The ones who are hypocrites are fearful*

*that should be sent down against them a chapter of the Quran*
*to tell them what is in their hearts.*
*Say: Ridicule us, but, truly,*
*God is One Who Drives Out that of which you are fearful.* (9:64)
*And if you had asked them, they would say:*
*Truly, we had only been engaging in idle talk and playing.*
*Say: Was it God and His signs and His Messenger*
*that you had been ridiculing?* (9:65)
*Make no excuses! Surely, you disbelieved after your belief.*
*If We pardon a section of you,*
*We will punish another section*
*because, truly, they had been ones who sin.* (9:66)

## COMMENTARY°

### FAIR DISTRIBUTION ORDERED BY GOD

Having established the right attitude a Muslim should have towards God and His Messenger, which is an attitude of total acceptance of their judgment in all situations, the Chapter makes clear that the final decision on the distribution of charity does not belong to the Messenger. It is all God's decision, and it is He who determines which groups of people are entitled to receive a share. The Messenger's role is only to execute what God has ruled. Obligatory donations are taken from the rich in fulfilment of God's commandment, and they are given to the poor also in fulfilment of His same commandment. Its beneficiaries are certain groups of people specified in the Quran. There can be no addition to, or reduction from, these groups by anyone, not even the Messenger himself. **(9:60)**

Thus *zakat*, which is referred to here as charitable donations', occupies its important position in the Quranic law and the Quranic social system. It is not given as a favor by those from whom it is due, but is rather an incumbent duty. Nor is it given as a gift in an amount determined by the one who distributes it, but rather its amount is properly calculated. It is a major the Quranic duty collected by the state in order to fulfil a particular social service. The one who gives it does not hold a favor for doing so, and the beneficiary does not have to beg for it. No, the Quranic social system could never be based on begging.

*Zakat* is a branch of the Quranic message system of social security, and this system is far wider and more comprehensive than *zakat*, because it works along several lines that comprise all aspects of life and all sides of human ties. *Zakat* is only an important one of these lines.

*Zakat* is collected at the rate of one-tenth, or a half or a quarter

of one-tenth of the principal property, depending on the type of property held. It is collected from everyone who owns more than the threshold of *zakat* when a year has passed since he or she has had that threshold. This means that most members of the community make their contribution to the *Zakat* Fund. The proceeds are then spent according to the system outlined in the sign we are discussing. The first groups of its beneficiaries are the poor and the needy. The poor are those who have less than what they need to live on. The needy are also in the same position, but they do not show their need or ask for help.

Some among the people who qualify as *zakat* payers and pay their *zakat* one year may find their position has changed the following year. Their property may have decreased and they may not have enough for their needs. Thus they qualify as *zakat* beneficiaries. Some may not have ever paid any *zakat* but they nevertheless qualify as beneficiaries. In both these cases we see *zakat* as a means of social security. However, it is first and foremost a duty imposed by God. A human soul is purified as one pays *zakat* as a form of worship. It is purged of all traces of miserliness, and it triumphs over its love to retain money and property.

### THE BENEFICIARIES OF *ZAKAT*

Let us now look at the groups who should benefit by *zakat*. *Charities are only for the poor and the needy and the ones who work to collect it.* **(9:60)** We have already explained who the poor and the needy are. The third group of beneficiaries are the people who actually work in the collection and distribution of *zakat*.

*And the ones whose hearts are brought together.* This description applies to several groups of people. Among them may be people who are newcomers to the Quranic message and it is felt that they may be helped to consolidate their conviction of its truth. Also included in this category are those whom we hope to win over to the faith. Similarly, we may include here people who have already become Muslim, but we may give them *zakat* money to win over some of their colleagues and friends who may start to think about the Quranic message when they see that those who have become Muslim are being given gifts.

*To free the bondsperson.* **(9:60)** In olden days, slavery was an international system where captives of war were enslaved. There was no escape from this system where it had to be applied on the basis of an eye for an eye,' until the world could get rid of that system and replace it with something that does not involve enslaving anyone. This portion of *zakat* funds was used to help anyone who could buy

his own freedom in return for a sum of money which he would pay to his master. Alternatively, slaves would be bought with *zakat* funds and then set free by the Muslim authorities.

*And the ones who are in debt.* **(9:60)** This category includes anyone who has incurred debts for a purpose that does not involve committing a sin. They are helped in the repayment of their debts, instead of forcing them to go bankrupt, as happens in a materialistic civilization where business people who are unable to repay their debts have no other option. the Quranic message is a system based on social security, where no honorable human being is left to go by the wayside, and no honest person is lost. Under man-made law, or should we say the law of the jungle, people are allowed to eat one another like fish, although they give the process a legal guise.

*And in the way of God.* **(9:60)** Under this heading any activity which brings benefit to the Muslim community and serves the advancement of God's cause may be included.

*And for the traveler of the way.* **(9:60)** This includes anyone who might have spent or lost his money while on a journey. He is given what will see him home, even though he may be rich in his hometown.

This is then the *zakat* system which some people criticize these days, describing it as a system of begging and handouts. It is simply a social duty, discharged in the form of an act of the Quranic worship, to purge people's hearts of all traces of miserliness and a grudging love of money. It establishes a bond of mutual care and compassion between all people in the Muslim community. It gives human life an element of loving care while providing a comprehensive system of social security. It retains at the same time its essential nature of being an act of worship which strengthens the bond between man and God, as well as the social human bond.

It is after all: *This is a duty to God.* **(9:60)** who knows what is good for humanity and who provides the best system for it based on His wisdom. For, *And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:60)**

## THE MESSENGER'S CARE

This explanation of the *zakat* system and how *zakat* is to be distributed shows at the same time how ignorant and ill-mannered were those people who criticized the Messenger and made unfavorable remarks about his honesty. The Chapter gives further examples of hypocrites and what they used to say and do: *And among them are those who malign the Prophet and say:* **(9:61)**

Here their extremely bad manners in their dealings with the Messenger appear in a different way. They find him extremely accessible,

listening to all people with full attention, and always making them welcome. He treats them as they profess to be, without judging their intentions, as he is indeed required to do according to the principles of his faith. They describe his exemplary attitude and refined manners by the wrong adjectives. Describing the Messenger , they say: *He is unquestioning.* By this they mean that he listens to all people, and that he can easily be taken in by lies and false assertions. He believes anyone who is ready to swear to him, and he accepts whatever is being said to him with a false air of conviction.

The Quran uses their very words to silence them with its reply: "And among them are others who hurt the Messenger and say: *Say: He is unquestioning of what is good for you.* **(9:61)** He is a good ear, listening to what God reveals and communicating it to you as it is. In it you have what is most beneficial to you, ensuring a very good outcome for you. Besides, he listens to you most politely, without confronting you with your hypocrisy and scheming, aware of all that as he certainly is.

Moreover, *he believes in God.* **(9:61)** He certainly believes what God tells him about you and about any other people. He also *believes in ones who believe.* **(9:61)** and he believes what they tell him. He knows them to be true believers and he knows that true faith deters its adherents from saying anything false or putting up any false appearance. But above all the Messenger is: *And he is a mercy to those of you who believed.* **(9:61)** He leads them by the hand to all that is good. *And those of you who malign the Messenger of God, for them is a painful punishment.* **(9:61)** That suffering will undoubtedly be inflicted by God on anyone who hurts His Messenger. He will not allow anyone who hurts His Messenger to escape punishment.

### DREADING EXPOSURE

*They swear by God to you to please you, but God and His Messenger have better right that they should please Him if they had been ones who believe.* **(9:62)** They are always ready to swear by God in order to persuade others to believe them. Here the aim of their swearing is also to please the believers. This is typical of the hypocrites everywhere. They say and do whatever they want behind people's backs, but they are too cowardly to admit to their real attitude. They will not say openly what should be said. Therefore, they try to seek every sort of cover and put on any false appearance in the hope of pleasing other people.

*They swear by God to you to please you, but God and His Messenger have better right that they should please Him if they had been ones who believe.* **(9:62)** Why should they care about other human

beings? What power or influence do they have? But a person who does not believe in God and does not submit to Him will always fear and submit to a human being like him. He would be much better off submitting to God in front of whom all people are alike. A person who submits to God will never suffer any humiliation. The only people who are humiliated and who feel their own inadequacy are those who turn away from God and fear their fellow human beings.

*Know they not that whoever opposes God and His Messenger, then, truly, for him will be the fire of hell—one who will dwell in it forever? That is the tremendous degradation.* **(9:63)** This is a question of censure and rebuke. They profess to be believers, and a believer knows for certain that there can be no offense greater than defying God and His Messenger and taking a stand in opposition to Him. Hell stands in waiting for anyone who commits such an offense. Moreover, humiliation is the fitting reward of rebellion. If they are truly believers, as they claim to be, how is it then that they do not know such an elementary fact?

They are much too cowardly to confront the Messenger and the believers openly. They fear that God will expose their reality and reveal their intentions to His Messenger: **(9:64-9:66)**

This is a general statement that applied to all hypocrites who feared that revelations might be sent down to expose what they entertained in their hearts. They would then be out on a limb, with all that they had carefully concealed being brought out into the open. However, we have several reports of certain events that led to the revelation of these signs.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Each week, develop a heightened awareness of one of the moral traits that you have studied so far (belief, God-consciousness (*taqwa*) and virtuous conduct (birr). Focus one week on belief, the next on God-consciousness, etc. For example, if you are focusing on God-consciousness for the week, try to notice when you are being forgetful of God in what you do. When you orally express or write out your views (for whatever reason), ask yourself whether you are clear about what you are trying to say. In doing this, of course, focus

on four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to their choice of words),
2. Elaborating on your meaning with other words,
3. Giving examples of what you mean from experiences you have had,
4. Using analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what you mean.

In other words, you will frequently: state, elaborate, illustrate and exemplify their points. You will regularly ask others to do the same.

**DEVELOPING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION**

When evaluating or developing criteria for evaluation, assess both yourselves and others, noting their tendency to favor yourself. Critical thinkers learn to consistently apply standards of evidence and proof to themselves as well as to others. We practice what we advocate for others. We are able to readily admit any discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and behavior. We are fervent believers in what has been justified by our own thought and experience. We bring together the person we want to be with the person that we are. However, it is not uncommon for many people to be inconsistent in applying their standards once their ego is involved. We cannot become egocentric and overrate the positive traits of people who like us and underrate those who do not. If our ego dominates us, we become blind to our understanding. We promote whatever serves our needs and disregard whatever does not support what we want.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I focused on one moral trait each week and I was able to learn how to internalize them.

## Lesson 113(9). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empowering Constancy, Change

**How do I develop courage (determination, constancy)?**

In order to develop courage, you need to question what you learn. It takes courage on your part to admit that some ideas are dangerous and lack truth and to be true to your own thinking, questioning beliefs that you hold deeply. Courage is required to not conform to ideas that you know to be false.

It is the primary duty of the believers to participate actively in the struggle for the establishment of a social order based on peace, harmony, and justice: *And fight them until there be no persecution, and the way of life be for God. Then, if they refrained themselves, then, there is to be no deep seated dislike, but against the ones who are unjust. Fight aggression* (2:193) in which everybody is equal before the law, and people in authority work out their policies after ascertaining the views of the people. *And those who responded to their Lord and performed their formal prayer and their affairs are by counsel among themselves, and who spend of what We provided them.* (42:38)

Courage is having a consciousness of the need to face and fairly address ideas, beliefs, or viewpoints toward which you have strong negative emotions and to which you have not given a serious hearing. This courage is connected with the recognition that ideas considered dangerous or absurd are sometimes rationally justified (in whole or in part) and that conclusions and beliefs inculcated in us are sometimes false or misleading.

In this endeavor to realize the moral law in his individual and social life, the human being has often to contend against evil forces represented in the person of Satan. (15:35-15:40) But it is within his power to resist and overcome them. (6:99) Though the human being is always prone to weakness and susceptible to seduction by the forces of evil, yet his weakness is rectifiable under the guidance of revelation, (2:36) and such people as follow the law of God-consciousness shall be immune from these lapses (3:175) or be cowardly in their behavior. (3:122)

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:67-9:72

**Madinah:** *The ones who are male hypocrites*
*and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other.*
*They command that which is unlawful*
*and prohibit that which is honorable and close their hands.*
*They forgot God so He forgot them.*
*Truly, the ones who are hypocrites,*
*they are the ones who disobey.* (9:67)
*And God promised the males, ones who hypocrites*

*and the females, ones who are hypocrites*
*and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell,*
*ones who will dwell in it forever!*
*It will be enough for them. God cursed them.*
*And for them is an abiding punishment.* (9:68)
*Like those before you who had been with more strength than you*
*and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment*
*so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed*
*those who were before you their apportionment.*
*And you engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk.*
*As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present*
*and are such in the world to come.*
*And those, they are the ones who are losers.* (9:69)
*Approaches them not the tidings of those before them*
*—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud,*
*and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian,*
*and that which are cities overthrown?*
*Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.*
*So it had not been God who did wrong to them,*
*rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves.* (9:70)
*The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe,*
*some are protectors of some other.*
*They command to that which is honorable*
*and they prohibit that which is unlawful*
*and they perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms*
*and obey God and His Messenger.*
*Those, God will have mercy on them.*
*Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* (9:71)
*God promised males, the ones who believe and the females,*
*the ones who believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings*
*in the Gardens of Eden.*
*And the greater contentment is with God.*
*That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph.* (9:72)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE TRODDEN PATH OF HYPOCRISY

So far, the Chapter has given us a number of examples of what the hypocrites said and did, as well as the way their concepts and views are formulated. Now it moves on to describe their true nature and their distinctive qualities which set them as a class apart from true believers. It also defines the punishment awaiting all hypocrites: **(9:67-9:68)**

So, all the hypocrites have the same nature and the same characteristics, regardless of the time and the place where they are found. Their actual actions and statements may differ but they all share the same essence and go back to the same roots. They all have the same essential characteristics: wickedness at heart, ill intentions towards others, and evil scheming against them, because they feel themselves to be too weak and cowardly to enter into an open confrontation, etc. Their behavior is similarly wicked: they urge others to do what they know to be wrong, and discourage them from doing what is right. They are also tight-fisted with their money. They will not give financial support to any good cause except when they need to do so in order to give a false impression about themselves.

At the same time, they deride those who do right and belittle the committing of wrong deeds. But in all that, they conceal their motives and notions. Whatever they say about right and wrong, they say it in whispers, or sly remarks, ridiculing people and slandering them, because they have no courage to confront anyone with their true convictions. Only when they feel secure do they come out with what is truly in their hearts.

*They forgot God.* **(9:67)** so they only consider their own interests and weigh up other people's reactions. They only fear those who are powerful among fellow human beings. With such, they are humble and submissive. They try their best to please them and to carry favor with them. As a result, God *forgot them* **(9:67)** He gives them no weight and no consideration. Such indeed is their situation in this life, and so it is in the life to come. People only give due importance to those who are strong, ready to speak up and make their position clear, defending their beliefs and trying to impress others with their ideas, and who fight or make peace in open daylight. Such people pay little attention to human beings in order to give all importance to the Lord of humanity. As they take their position in support of the truth, they fear no one. Such people are given their due respect by others.

*Truly, the ones who are hypocrites, they are the ones who disobey.* **(9:67)** They have abandoned the path of faith, and chosen the path of error. Therefore God promises them the same fate as that He promised the ungrateful. That is indeed a sorrowful destiny: *And God promised the males, ones who hypocrites and the females, ones who are hypocrites and the ones who are ungrateful, the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever! It will be enough for them.* **(9:68)** It is a fitting recompense for their crimes. There is no need for any other punishment. Nevertheless, they are denied access to God's mercy: *God cursed them. And for them is an abiding punishment.* **(9:68)**

Such a wicked nature is not something new; it has its parallels and forerunners in history. Previous communities had their own cases of hypocrisy. Those hypocrites of old faced a doom which befitted their offenses, after they had their apportioned share of what this earthly life had to offer. Despite the fact that those were even more powerful than the hypocrite Arabs and possessed greater wealth and had more numerous children, nothing of all this was of any use to them when God inflicted His punishment on them.

Therefore the Quran reminds those Arabs of what happened to those communities before them, and warns them that as they follow the same route, they are likely to face the same outcome. If heeded, such warnings should be enough to guide them to follow the message of truth: *Like those before you who had been with more strength than you and more wealth and children, they enjoyed their apportionment so you enjoyed your apportionment as enjoyed those who were before you their apportionment. And you engaged in idle talk as they engaged in idle talk.* **(9:69)**

They are deluded by the fact that they have power, wealth and children. Therefore they adopt such an attitude. However, those who recognize the greatest power of God have no such delusions about any earthly or material power. They only fear the One who has the greatest power, and, therefore, they use their own power in demonstrating their obedience to Him and ensuring that His word reigns supreme. Their wealth and children do not give them any false sense of power, because they realize that it is God who has given them these. They are keen to show their gratitude to Him and to use what He has given them in what pleases Him. It is only those who have taken themselves away from the source of real power that are ungrateful and arrogant. Their style of life is that of eating and enjoyment, just like animals.

*As to those, their actions were fruitless in the present and are such in the world to come.* **(9:69)** Indeed whatever they do is worthless, because it is the same as a plant which has no roots: it cannot stand, grow or blossom.*And those, they are the ones who are losers.* **(9:69)** They have ended with complete loss with nothing left for them.

The Chapter now makes a general address, wondering at those who follow in the footsteps of those communities which suffered God's punishment without learning the lesson: *Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents.***(9:70)**

The Chapter then puts a question with regard to those who just seek enjoyment and tread the path of destroyed nations: *Approaches them not the tidings of those before them—the folk of Noah and of Ad and of Thamud, and of a folk of Abraham, and of the Companions of Midian, and that which are cities overthrown? Their Messengers approached them with the clear portents. So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves.* **(9:70)** But they choose to deny such clear evidence and follow the path of error instead. Therefore God punished them for what they did: *So it had not been God who did wrong to them, rather, they had been doing wrong to themselves.* **(9:70)**

### THE BELIEVERS' DWELLING PLACE

In contrast to the ungrateful and the hypocrites stand the true believers. They are characterized by their totally different nature, different behavior and different destiny: **(9:71-9:72)**

While the hypocrites are all of a kind, having the same characteristics, the believers are by nature a community united in furthering every good thing and promoting what is right. Despite having the same qualities, the hypocrites cannot achieve a status of friends or community. That requires mutual solidarity which is alien to the nature of hypocrisy. Such solidarity cannot be achieved even within a group of hypocrites, who remain weak individuals, despite their identical qualities and behavior. The Quran points this out in describing both groups: *The ones who are male hypocrites and the ones who are female hypocrites, some are of some other.* **(9:67)** *The males, ones who believe and the females, ones who believe, some are protectors of some other.* **(9:71)** An individual believer has the same qualities of the community, where the values of solidarity and mutual care are upheld to promote what is good and prevent what is wrong: *They command to that which is honorable and they prohibit that which is unlawful.* **(9:71)**

Whenever division appears within the community, it must be a signal pointing to the existence of a strange factor which is alien to its nature and its faith. There must be a purpose or an ailment which prevents the first characteristic of the Muslim community from taking root. That characteristic is described by God, the All- knowing who is aware of all details: "The believers, men and women, are friends to one another." Their friendship motivates them to enjoin what is right and to censure and forbid what is wrong. Their aim is to make God's word reign supreme, and to make their community fulfil its role in human life.

*And they perform the formal prayer* for prayer gives them their

bond with God. *And give the purifying alms* for *zakat* is the duty which cements the bonds within the Muslim community. It reflects the material and spiritual solidarity within this community. *And obey God and His Messenger.* **(9:71)** They have no desire other than to discharge God's orders and obey Him and His Messenger. They have no law other than that revealed by God, and no constitution other than the faith revealed by God to His Messenger. When God and His Messenger determine something concerning their affairs, they accept it realizing that this is the choice they have. This gives them unity of goals, approaches and methods of action. They have a single course which they follow, paying no attention to other courses of action which may cause disunity in their ranks.

*Those, God will have mercy on them.* **(9:71)** Mercy is not bestowed only in the hereafter. It is first bestowed in this life, and it is granted first to the individual who fulfils his duties of enjoining what is right and forbidding what is evil, attends to his prayer and pays his *zakat*. It is also granted to the community which is made up of individuals of such qualities. It is manifested in the reassurance felt by such people and in their bond with God who looks after them and spares them much strife and friction. God's mercy is also seen in the unity and co-operation which are characteristic of such a community where every individual enjoys a contented life, and is reassured by God's acceptance.

These four characteristics of the believers: enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, attending to prayer and paying *zakat* are contrasted with four characteristics of the hypocrites, namely, enjoining what is wrong, forbidding what is right, forgetting God and tightening their fists. God's mercy which He bestows on the believers is shown here in contrast to His rejection of the hypocrites and the ungrateful. It is for maintaining these characteristics that God has promised the believers victory and establishment in the land. Thus they will be able to put them into effect when they exercise their role as the leaders of humanity.

*Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* **(9:71)** He is able to give power to the believers so that they can help one another to discharge their duties. His wisdom is also seen in granting victory to such a community which sets human life on the right footing, and ensures that God's word reigns supreme.

As we have seen, suffering in hell is the destiny awaiting the hypocrites and ungrateful. They cannot escape God's curse. The fact that He will forget them shows that they are of little importance, suffering deprivation. In contrast, the happiness of being in heaven is what awaits the believers: *God promised males, the ones who believe*

*and the females, the ones who believe, Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever and good dwellings in the Gardens of Eden.* **(9:72)** That is then their dwelling place.

But there is something much greater that awaits them: *And the greater contentment is with God.* **(9:72)** Indeed, heaven and all the bliss and happiness that are assured for those who are admitted into it appear to be so small when compared to being accepted by God: *That, it is the winning of the sublime triumph.* Indeed one moment of being in communion with God, contemplating His majesty; a moment of release from the restraints of a physical constitution, and the limitations of this earth and its petty concerns; a moment when a ray of that light which cannot be seen by our eyes lightens our hearts; a moment when the human soul is enlightened by a glimpse of God's mercy; any moment of these which are experienced only by a small number of people when they have clear, undisturbed vision is far greater than all enjoyments and all aspirations. How do people feel when His acceptance overwhelms their souls and they receive it without interruption?

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

#### LEARN TO EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS

Those who have been habitually praised for uncritically accepting others' claims may feel the rug pulled out from under them for a while when expected to think for themselves. Be emotionally supported in these circumstances and encouraged to express the natural hesitancy, discomfort, or anxiety you may experience so you may work your way through these feelings. A willingness to consider unpopular beliefs develops by degrees. You should exercise discretion beginning first with mildly unpopular rather than with extremely unpopular beliefs. If, during the course of the year, an idea or suggestion which at first sounded 'crazy' was proven valuable, you can later be reminded of it, and discuss it at length, and compare it to other events.

Courage is fostered through a consistently open-minded atmosphere. You should be encouraged to honestly consider or doubt any belief. You who disagree with or doubt your peers should be given support. Raise probing questions regarding unpopular ideas which you have hitherto been discouraged

from considering. Model intellectual courage by playing devil's advocate. Why does this idea bother you?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I kept an intellectual journal where I described a situation that was emotionally significant to me, that I deeply cared about.
I responded to the situation and wrote about it in my journal.
I realized what was going on in the situation.
I dug beneath the surface.
I assessed the implications of my analysis.
I learned more about myself.

## Lesson 113(10). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Persevering in Goodness

### What is perseverance?

Perseverance is being willing and conscious of the need to pursue insights and truths despite difficulties, obstacles, and frustrations; a firm adherence to rational principles despite irrational opposition of others; a sense of the need to struggle with confusion and unsettled questions over an extended period of time in order to achieve deeper understanding or insight. This trait is undermined when others continually provide the answers, do your thinking for you or substitute easy tricks, algorithms, and short cuts for careful, independent thought.

### What does persevering in goodness mean?

Perseverance in goodness is an attribute of God: *And whatever you have of divine blessing is from God.* (16:53) and, therefore, it becomes the duty of every person to obey his own impulse to good: *And whoever volunteered good, then, truly, God is One Who is Responsive, Knowing.* (2:158) He should do good as God has been good to all: d*o good even as God did good to you* (28:77) and love those who do good: *And do good. Truly, God loves the ones who are doers of good.* (2:195) Believers hasten in every good work. As all prophets were quick in emulating good works, (21:90) so all people are advised to strive together (as in a race) towards all that is good: *Be forward, then, in good deeds.* (2:148) and virtuous. All good things are for the believers; goodly reward in the hereafter and highest grace of God awaits those who are foremost in good deeds: *some of them are ones who take the lead with good deeds by permission of God. That is the greater grace.* (35:32) Believers are advised to repel evil with what is better, for thereby enmity will change into warm friendship: *Drive back with what is fairer. Then, behold he who between you and between him was enmity as if he had been a protector, a loyal friend.* (41:34) It is often reflective in that students have to go back and think about similar problems that they had faced before and re-analyze them. They do not let difficulties, obstacles and frustrations stop them from pursuing truths with their insight (the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing).

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:73-9:80

**Madinah:** *O Messenger!*
*Struggle with the ones who are ungrateful*
*and the ones who are hypocrites*
*and be you harsh against them.*

*And their place of shelter will be hell.*
*Miserable will be the Homecoming!* (9:73)
*They swear by God that they said not against the Messenger but,*
*certainly, they said the word of ingratitude*
*and they were ungrateful after their submission to God.*
*And they were about to do something that they never attain.*
*And they sought revenge but that God would enrich them*
*and His Messenger with His grace.*
*And if they repent, it would be better for them.*
*And if they turn away, God will punish them*
*with a painful punishment in the present*
*and in the world to come.*
*And there is not for them on earth*
*either a protector or a helper.* (9:74)
*And of them are some who made a contract with God saying:*
*If He gave us of His grace, we will be charitable*
*and, certainly, we will be*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (9:75)
*Then, when He gave them of His grace,*
*they were misers with it and turned away*
*and they were ones who turn aside.* (9:76)
*He made the consequence hypocrisy in their hearts*
*until a Day they will meet Him*
*because they broke with God what they promised Him,*
*because they had been lying against Him.* (9:77)
*Know they not that God knows their conspiring secretly*
*and their secret?*
*And that God is The Knower of the unseen.* (9:78)
*Those who find fault with ones who are volunteer donors*
*to charities from among the ones who believe*
*and those who find not but their striving to give,*
*so they derided them. God will deride them.*
*And they will have a painful punishment.* (9:79)
*Ask for forgiveness for them or ask not for forgiveness for them,*
*if thou hast asked for forgiveness for them seventy times,*
*God will never forgive them.*
*That is because they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger.*
*And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (9:80)

## Commentary°

### All Out Effort to Fight Ungratefuls

Thus the Chapter has given us a clear outline of the essential characteristics of true believers and those of the hypocrites who claim

to be believers. This is now followed by an order from God to His Messenger to strive against the ungrateful and the hypocrites. The Quran makes it clear that the hypocrites certainly disbelieved after they had claimed to be Muslims. They tried something that only their disbelief could have led them to contemplate, but God foiled their attempts. It wonders at their hostile attitude to the Messenger when they have gained nothing but good from his message. It invites them to repent and change their attitude. **(9:73-9:74)**

This event betrays what those people harbored of ill intentions. Whether this event or a similar one is meant here, it remains very surprising that they should be so treacherous. The Quran wonders at their attitude: *They swear by God that they said not against the Prophet but, certainly, they said the word of ingratitude and they were ungrateful after their submission to God. And they were about to do something that they never attain. And they sought revenge but that God would enrich them and His Messenger with His grace.* **(9:74)** the Quranic message had caused them no harm to justify such hostility. The only reason that could be thought of was perhaps the wealth they were able to gain as a result of the advances made by the Quranic message. It may be that the easy life they were able to lead accounted for their hostility!

This is followed by a clear verdict concerning their case: **(9:74)**

### LYING TO GOD

The Chapter goes on to portray more cases of hypocrisy and how the hypocrites behave. **(9:75-9:76)**

Some of these hypocrites pledge solemnly to God that if He would bestow His grace on them and give them some of His bounty, they would be very charitable to the poor and behave in the way expected of righteous people. Such a pledge, however, is given at a time when those people are poor, when their poverty makes them yearn for a time of plenty. Yet when God answers their prayers, and favors them with His bounty, they forget all about their pledges, and behave like misers. They turn away unwilling to honor their pledges. This violation of their promises and lying to God make hypocrisy take root in their hearts. Therefore they continue to be hypocrites until they die.

Therefore their deliberately unfulfilled pledges and their repeated lies breed hypocrisy which settles permanently in their hearts, as the Quranic sign describes: *He made the consequence hypocrisy in their hearts until a Day they will meet Him because they broke with God what they promised Him, because they had been lying against Him.* **(9:77)**

Since they claim to be believers **(9:78)**, do they not know that God knows all that there is in people's innermost hearts, and what they may say to each other even in the most private of situations? He is certainly aware of all that is kept hidden, and aware of the most secret of intentions. Since they know all this, they should not try to conceal any bad intention, hoping that God will not be aware of it. They should not have harbored any thoughts of leaving their pledges unfulfilled, or of lying to Him.

The Chapter then describes another version of the hypocrites' view of *zakat* which is contrary to that of the true believers. It also shows how the hypocrites are always given to taunting and slandering others, an indication of their perverted nature: *Those who find fault with ones who are volunteer donors to charities from among the ones who believe and those who find not but their striving to give, so they derided them. God will deride them. And they will have a painful punishment.* **(9:79)**

This is how they scoffed at the believers who were prompt in giving what they could, willingly and generously, eager to contribute as best as they could to the jihad campaign. They simply do not understand the motives of any true believer and why he gives willingly, nor do they understand that a believer's conscience urges him to do so. They do not appreciate the pure feelings which respond readily to the call to sacrifice. Therefore, they describe the one who gives much as showing off and say of the one who has only little to give away that he reminds others of his poverty. They thus abuse the rich person because he gives generously, and deride the poor person because he has only very little to give. Thus, no one who gives freely is immune from their derision. They do all this while they themselves stay behind, give nothing and remain niggardly. If they give anything away, they do it only out of hypocrisy. That is the only motive they understand.

Therefore they are given the decisive answer: *God will deride them. And they will have a painful punishment.* **(9:79)** What a painful ridicule which they will suffer. How can we imagine a few weak individuals suffering the ridicule of the Almighty and destined for His punishment. That is a woeful end no doubt.

### NEVER TO BE FORGIVEN

*Ask for forgiveness for them or ask not for forgiveness for them, if you have asked for forgiveness for them seventy times, God will never forgive them.* **(9:80)**

This sign refers to the hypocrites who deride the true believers when they come forward with their contributions and donations.

Such people have a well-known destiny which will not change. They shall not benefit by any request for forgiveness. "God will not forgive them," whether such requests are made on their behalf or not. It seems that the Messenger used to pray to God to forgive those who committed mistakes or sins in the hope that they would mend their ways and earn God's forgiveness. As for the hypocrites, their fate has been sealed. There is no going back, and that is for a very good reason: *That is because they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(9:80)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What was it like to not understand or be able to do it?
How did you come to understand it?
What was that like?
Was it worth it?
Did it seem worth it at the time?
What made you change your mind?

Will the support seem to the reader to justify the conclusion?
Should I change the conclusion, or beef up the support?
What counter-examples or problems would occur to the reader here?
What do I want to say about them?
How am I interpreting my Quranic source?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I chose one moral trait to strive for in one month.
I focused on how I can develop that positive trait in myself.
I recognized that I was becoming defensive when someone tried to point out a deficiency in my thinking.
I owned up to my own ignorance on the moral trait and began to deal with it.

## Lesson 113(11). Critical Thinking Quranic Moral Traits Empathetic Altruism

### What is empathetic altruism?

There is yet a higher stage of moral achievement described as selfless concern and love for the welfare of others or altruism (*ihsan*) which signifies performance of moral action in conformity with the moral ideal with the added sense of deep loyalty to the cause of God, done in the most graceful way that is motivated by a unique love for God. Performance of God-conscious actions accompanied by a true faith is only a stage in the moral life of a person which, after several stages, gradually matures into altruism (*ihsan*). Altruism is based on having a deep love for God. Love as a human ideal demands that the human being should love God as the complete embodiment of all moral values above everything else.

Altruism is the belief in or practice of disinterested and selfless concern for the well-being of others. Empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathetic altruism is to believe in an practice a selfless concern for the well-being of others through sharing the feelings of another.

Empathetic altruism is understanding the need to imaginatively put oneself in the place of others to genuinely understand them. Students must recognize their egocentric tendency to identify truth with their immediate perceptions or longstanding beliefs. Empathetic altruism correlates with the ability to accurately reconstruct the viewpoints and reasoning of others and to reason from premises, assumptions, and ideas other than their own. This trait also requires that they remember occasions when they were wrong, despite an intense conviction that they were right, and consider that they might be similarly deceived in a case at hand.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:81-9:89

**Madinah:** *The ones who are left behind*
*were glad of their positions behind the Messenger of God.*
*And they disliked struggling with their wealth*
*and themselves in the way of God.*
*And they said: Move not forward in the heat.*
*Say: The fire of hell has more severe heat.*
*Would that they had been understanding!* (9:81)
*So let them laugh a little and weep much*
*as a recompense for what they had been earning.* (9:82)
*Then, God returned **you** to a section of them.*
*And they asked **your** permission for going forth.*

*Then, say: You will never ever go forth with me*
*nor fight an enemy with me.*
*You were well-pleased sitting the first time.*
*Then, sit—ones who await with who lagged behind.* (9:83)
*Pray you not formally for any of them who died, ever,*
*or stand up at his grave.*
*Truly, they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger*
*and died while they are ones who disobey.* (9:84)
*And let not their wealth impress you nor their children.*
*For God only wants to punish them with these in the present*
*and their souls depart*
*while they were ones who are ungrateful.* (9:85)
*When a chapter of the Quran was caused to descend saying that:*
*Believe in God and struggle along with His Messenger,*
*those imbued with affluence ask permission of you.*
*And they said: Forsake us.*
*We would be with the ones who sit at home.* (9:86)
*They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.*
*And a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* (9:87)
*But the Messenger and those who believed with him*
*struggled with their wealth and their lives.*
*Those, for them are good deeds.*
*And those, they are the ones who will prosper.* (9:88)
*God prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in them forever.*
*That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* (9:89)

## COMMENTARY°

### PLEASED WITH ONE'S MISDEEDS

The Chapter resumes its comments on the attitude of those who stayed behind when the Messenger had marched to Tabuk: **(9:81-9:85)** Such people are so keen to ensure their continued personal comfort and are unwilling to spend anything of their wealth for God's cause. They are devoid of all desire to strive because their hearts are devoid of faith. The adjective used in the Arabic text to refer to them has the added connotation of showing them to be left behind as if they were dispensable articles of little value. They are delighted at having secured their own safety when they stayed at home after the Messenger and his Companions had departed on their blessed mission. They spared themselves the toil and hardship willingly undertaken by the believers who were ready to strive for God's cause, thinking that personal safety is a goal coveted by all men. Therefore: *The ones who are left behind were glad of their positions behind the*

*Messenger of God. And they disliked struggling with their wealth and themselves in the way of God.* **(9:81)** Such words are only said by a person who is keen to indulge himself in every luxury. Such a person is not fit to do anything which only men of endurance can undertake.

The Chapter answers them coupling the truth with sarcasm: *And they said: Move not forward in the heat. Say: The fire of hell has more severe heat. Would that they had been understanding!* **(9:81)** If they fear the heat of the summer and prefer the comfort of staying in the shade, how will they tolerate the heat of the Are of hell, when it is much more intense and longer lasting? Although this sounds like a remark full of derision, it only states the truth. The choice they had to make was between striving for a certain period in defense of God's cause, tolerating the heat of the earthly summer or being thrown in hell for an extended period the length of which is known to God alone.

*So let them laugh a little and weep much.* **(9:82)** Their laughter takes place in this life which lasts only for a certain number of days, but their tears are poured in the hereafter with its much longer days. Indeed each one of God's days is equal to one thousand years of ours. Their tears are *as a recompense for what they had been earning.* It is then a befitting and just reward.

Those hypocrites who preferred to stay behind during a time of hardship, when all Muslims were called upon to join the jihad campaign, are not fit to join any campaign or to take part in any effort undertaken for God's cause. Therefore, leniency is not the proper policy to follow with them. They are not to be given the chance of earning the honor of participating in jihad at any time. The Messenger is directed to make this clear to them whenever the occasion arises: *Then, God returned **you** to a section of them. And they asked **your** permission for going forth.* **(9:83)**

The Messenger is instructed to make it clear to them that they have no place in the ranks of the believers: *Then, say: You will never ever go forth with me nor fight an enemy with me.* **(9:83)** And the reason for this attitude is also made clear: *You were well-pleased sitting the first time.* **(9:83)** That deprived them of the privilege of being able to join the ranks of the fighters for God's cause and the honor of going forth with the Messenger. Therefore they are told: *Then, sit—ones who await with who lagged behind.* **(9:83)** You may stay with such people as are like you in their attitude. You all prefer to absent yourselves when the occasion requires sacrifices.

### STAYING BEHIND AT A TIME OF MOBILIZATION

This last instruction to the Messenger meant that he was not to

allow those hypocrites who stayed behind when he called on all Muslims to join him on the expedition to Tabuk to be part of any subsequent campaign. They were to be deprived of the privilege of joining any effort aimed at defending God's cause. The Messenger is also commanded not to give such people any semblance of honor: *Pray you not formally for any of them who died, ever, nor stand up at his grave.* **(9:84)**

The Chapter gives here the reason for this instruction: *Truly, they were ungrateful to God and His Messenger and died while they are ones who disobey.* **(9:84)** This explanation applies to the order not to pray for the dead among them and for the Messenger not to stand at any of their graves. But the principle itself has a wider application. Prayer and standing at the grave of a deceased person are aspects of honor. The Muslim community must not accord such an honor to anyone who stays behind at a time of jihad. The standing of any person in the Muslim community is related to what that person is ready to give, do or sacrifice at the time when he is called upon to do so. True Muslims give their all, remain steadfast at times of hardship and are always ready to strive with their wealth and persons. Therefore they receive the honor they deserve.

On the other hand, those who stay behind deserve neither the apparent honor seen by everyone in the community, nor the type of mental appreciation that is felt by people though may not be demonstrated in any action: *And let not their wealth impress you nor their children. For God only wants to punish them with these in the present and their souls depart while they were ones who are ungrateful.* **(9:85)** The general meaning of this sign has already been explained when a similar one was mentioned earlier in the Chapter. It is repeated here for a different reason. What is meant here is that no significance should be attached by the Muslim community to the wealth or the children of these hypocrites, because to admire these is to give such people a degree of mental honor or appreciation which they do not deserve. The only thing they deserve is to be ignored and looked upon with contempt.

When a Chapter was revealed from on high calling on them to believe in God and to strive alongside His Messenger, those of them who were well able to do so asked you to give them leave and said to you: *When a chapter of the Quran was caused to descend saying that: Believe in God and struggle along with His Messenger, those imbued with affluence ask permission of thee. And they said: Forsake us. We would be with the ones who sit at home.* **(9:86)**

These signs tell of two different natures, one of hypocrisy, weakness, and self- abasement, and another full of faith, strength and sac-

rifice. These give rise to two different attitudes: one of deviousness, humbleness and lack of self-respect, and another which is straightforward, dignified and ready to sacrifice.

In regard to the former, they do not realize how abject and humiliating their request is. They are only interested in their own safety. Those who make their own safety paramount do not feel any shame, because: *They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind. And a seal was set on their hearts so they understand not.* **(9:87)** Had they been able to understand it, they would have realized that it is when one strives for God's cause that one feels strong, leading a life of dignity and honor, and when one stays behind, one lives in weakness and abject humiliation. But who are these? They are the ones who *were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.* (9:87)

*But the Messenger and those who believed with him struggled with their wealth and their lives.* (9:88) They fulfil the duties imposed on them by their faith and work hard to achieve the dignity which cannot be attained while one stays behind. Therefore: *Those, for them are good deeds.* **(9:88)** Such good things are of both the type enjoyed here in this life and the one attained in the life to come. In this world they enjoy dignity, honor and a position which guarantees that people respect what they say. In the hereafter, they receive the best and fullest reward, as they attain God's acceptance. *And those, they are the ones who will prosper.* **(9:88)** They prosper in this life as they enjoy good living, and they prosper in the life to come as they receive their mighty reward. *God prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever. That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* **(9:89)**

Some of the Bedouins who had excuses to offer turned up, begging to be granted exemption; while those who denied God and His Messenger stayed behind. *And the ones who make excuses drew near from among the nomads that permission be given them. And they sat back, those who lied against God and His Messenger. There will light on those who were ungrateful among them a painful punishment.* **(9:90)**

The first group are the ones who have real excuses which merit their exemption. Therefore no blame is attached to them for their request. The others have no real excuse. They stay behind and lie to God and His Messenger. The ungrateful among these have grievous punishment awaiting them. Those who repent and do not disbelieve are not discussed here because they may face a different fate.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Did God prescribe mercy for Himself?
Can you describe a time when you found God's mercy?
How is the Quran a mercy to those who believe?
Who can best phrase this question?
Is there another way to put this question?
What is the advantage of putting the question this way?
How would you put the question?
We can ask questions about questions.

When have you enjoyed helping someone? When not? Why?
Did you help that person?
When is it hard to listen to what someone else has to say? Why?
Have you ever not wanted to share something? Should you have?
Why or why not? If you did not share, why did you not share?
Or: What were you thinking? Why?
Did you know you should not? Or: Did it seem okay at the time? Why?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I recognized that by defining something, I was giving it meaning.
I realized that once I defined something, the meaning then determined how I feel about it, how I act upon it and the implications it had.
I realized that there is often more than one way to define or give meaning to something.
I was able to turn the negatives into positives.
I was able to turn my mistakes into opportunities to learn.
I was able to make a list of five recurrent negative contexts in which I feel frustrated, angry, unhappy or worried.
I identified the definition/meaning in each case that was causing my negative emotions.
I was able to find a positive definition for each and then plan for my new responses as well as new emotions.

## LESSON 113(12). CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC MORAL TRAITS BEING FAIR AND JUST

Developing fairness requires the willingness and consciousness of the need to entertain all viewpoints sympathetically and to assess them with the same moral traits, without reference to one's own feelings or vested interests, or the feelings or vested interests of one's friends, community, or nation. It implies adherence to moral traits without reference to one's own advantage or the advantage of one's group.

The fair and just Quranic critical thinkers work to improve their thinking whenever they can. They want things for themselves, but they aren't selfish. They want to help other people. They want to help make the world better for everyone. They are willing to give things up to help others (when it makes sense to). They don't always have the right answers, but they work to improve their thinking (and actions) over time.

Fairness and justice is a divine attribute and the Quran emphasizes that we should adopt it as a moral ideal. God commands people to be just towards one another: *Say: My Lord commanded me to justice* (7:29); *truly, God commands justice and kindness and giving to one who is a possessor of kinship and He prohibits depravity and ones who are unlawful and insolent. He admonishes you so that perhaps you will recollect.* (16:90); *and I was commanded to be just among you* (42:15), and, in judging between person and person, to judge justly: *And when you gave judgment between humanity, give judgment justly* (4:58) *for He loves those who judge justly.*

All believers stand firmly for justice even if it goes against themselves, their parents, their relatives, without any distinction of rich and poor: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God even against yourselves or the ones who are your parents or the nearest of kin, whether you would be rich or poor.* (4:135) God's revelation itself is an embodiment of truth and justice: *Completed was the Word of your Lord in sincerity and justice.* (6:115) It is revealed with the Balance (of right and wrong) so that people may stand forth for justice: *We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance so that humanity may uphold equity.* (57:25)

The value of justice is absolute and morally binding and the believers are, therefore, warned that they should not let the hatred of some people lead them to transgress the limits of justice or make them depart from the ideal of justice, for justice is very near to piety and righteousness: *Be staunch in equity as witnesses to God and let not that you detest a folk drive you into not dealing justly. Be just. That is nearer to God-consciousness.* (5:8)

Justice demands that people should be true in word and deed: *They are the ones who remain steadfast and the ones who are sincere and the ones who are morally obligated and the ones who spend in the way of God and the ones who ask for forgiveness at the breaking of day* (3:17) faithfully observe the contracts which they have made and fulfill all obligations.

## CHAPTER 9: REPENTANCE (AL-TAWBAH)
## SIGNS 9:90-9:99

**Madinah:** *And the ones who make excuses*
*drew near from among the nomads*
*that permission be given them.*
*And they sat back, those who lied against God and His Messenger.*
*There will light on those who were ungrateful among them a*
*painful punishment.* (9:90)
*Not on the weak nor on the sick*
*nor on those who find nothing to spend*
*is there fault if they were true to God and His Messenger.*
*There is no way against the ones who are doers of good.*
*And God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (9:91)
*Nor on those who when they approached* ***you***
*that* ***you*** *would find mounts to carry them,*
***you*** *had said: I find not what will carry you.*
*So they turned away while their eyes overflow with tears of grief*
*when they find nothing for them to spend in the way of God.* (9:92)
*The way of blame is only against those who ask thee permission*
*to remain behind and they are rich.*
*They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.*
*And God set a seal on their hearts so that they know not.* (9:93)
*They will make excuses to you when you returned to them.*
*Say: Make no excuses. We will never believe you.*
*Surely, God told us news about you.*
*God and His Messenger will consider your actions.*
*Again, you will be returned to One Who Knows*
*the unseen and the visible.*
*Then, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* (9:94)
*They will swear to you by God when you turned about to them*
*so that you renounce them.*
*So renounce them.*
*Truly, they are a disgrace.*
*And their place of shelter will be hell,*
*as a recompense for what they had been earning.* (9:95)
*They swear to you so that you will be well-pleased with them.*
*So while you be well-pleased with them,*
*then, truly,*
*God is not well-pleased with the folk,*
*the ones who disobey.* (9:96)
*The nomads are stauncher in ingratitude and hypocrisy*
*and more likely not to know the ordinances*
*that God caused to descend to His Messenger.*

*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:97)
*And of the nomads are some who take what they spend*
*to themselves as something owed them and await*
*for some turn of your fortunes.*
*Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune.*
*And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (9:98)
*And of the nomads are some who believe in God*
*and the Last Day and take for himself what he spends—*
*as an offering to God—and blessings of the Messenger*
*that will be sent for them.*
*No doubt these are not but an offering from them.*
*God will cause them to enter into His mercy.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (9:99)

## COMMENTARY°

### EAGER BUT WITHOUT MEANS

The Chapter then provides a definitive statement with regard to who should join the army when there is a general call of mobilization. It is not obligatory that all people, whether able or not, should fight. the Quranic message is a religion that does not overburden people. God does not charge anyone with more than he or she can bear. Those without the means or the ability to fight cannot be blamed because of their situation: **(9:90-9:92)**

The issue is clear, then. The weak, disabled, ill and also those who are too poor to pay their own expenses and for whom the Messenger cannot provide transport will not be blamed for staying behind. The real blame attaches to those who come to the Messenger with their thinly disguised excuses, when they have the means to go to battle and have no real reason for staying behind. *The way of blame is only against those who ask you permission to remain behind and they are rich.* **(9:93)**

It is the ones happy to stay behind that are to be blamed, because they have no real desire to take part in a struggle for God's cause. They do not give what is due to God when He has given them wealth and ability, nor do they fulfil their duties to the Quranic message when it has given them power and dignity, or to their community which gives them protection and honor. Therefore God's description of them: *They were well-pleased to be with those who stay behind.* **(9:93)** They are then weak of heart, spineless, and content, though without reason, to remain with those who stay behind for valid reasons such as women, children and disabled men who are exempt from jihad.

In view of this: *And God set a seal on their hearts so that they*

*know not.* **(9:93)** With what they have preferred for themselves of laziness and inactivity, staying away from active participation in efforts that open new horizons for the Quranic cause, God has sealed their means of reception, feeling and understanding.

### HOLLOW EXCUSES

*They will make excuses to you when you returned to them.* **(9:94)** This is a piece of information which God gives to His Messenger and the faithful among his Companions. It tells them of what those hypocrites will be doing when the Muslims return from their arduous expedition. This confirms that these signs were revealed when the Muslim army was on its way back from the expedition, and before they had arrived in Madinah. The hypocrites would come with their excuses, because they would be ashamed to let their action be seen in its true light. It would be disgraceful to let it be seen with its real motives, which were a weak faith, a preference for personal safety and an unwillingness to fight a great power: " *Say: Make no excuses. We will never believe you. Surely, God told us news about you.* **(9:94)**

Those offering their excuses are told not to do so, because words are of no use. They need to show what they do. If their action confirms what they say, then their assertions will be true. If not, there can be no trust or acceptance. *God and His Messenger will consider your actions.* **(9:94)** God sees every action and knows every secret hidden in every heart. He knows the real intentions of all His creation. The Messenger was to take what people say in conjunction with what they do. That would be the basis of internal relationships in the Muslim community.

Moreover, matters will not end in this life on earth. There will eventually come the reckoning and the reward which will be based on God's absolute knowledge of what is done openly and what remains in people's hearts: *Again, you will be returned to One Who Knows the unseen and the visible.* **(9:94)**

The phrase "beyond the reach of human perception" means what people do not know, while "what is manifest" refers to what they see and what comes to their knowledge. God knows all this when the statement is read in this simple sense, but it also has a wider and more profound sense. God knows everything in this world which is seen and experienced, and He knows everything in the worlds beyond, of which we know nothing. There is an intended meaning in what God says to those whom He addresses in this sign: *Then, He will tell you of what you had been doing.* **(9:94)** They know what they do, but God — limitless is He in His glory — knows their doings better than they, and He will tell them about these. It is often the case that a per-

son may not be aware of an inner motive for something he does. God knows it better than he. An action may very often produce an outcome that may remain unknown to the person who performed it. What is meant here is that God gives people the results of what they used to do. That is the reward they will have for their actions. Here, though, they are only informed and the reward itself is not specified. *They will swear to you by God when you turned about to them so that you renounce them. So renounce them.* .**(9:95)**

God instructs His Messenger to leave them alone, not as a sign of forgiveness, but as a sign of turning away from them, because they are abominable: *Truly, they are a disgrace.* **(9:95)** This gives a physical expression of mental impurity. They are not physically or bodily unclean, but they are unclean mentally, as a result of their actions. The physical description gives an image that is much more abominable, revolting and contemptible. They are more concerned with their personal safety than striving for the cause of the community and are hence described as unclean. Their impurity contaminates souls, spreads disease and fills people with disgust, just like a rotten, dead body left in their midst.

*And their place of shelter will be hell, as a recompense for what they had been earning.* **(9:95)** They feel that they gain by staying behind, securing their safety and comfort and enjoying their wealth. The fact is that in this life they are unclean, while they waste their share of the life to come. They end up in utter loss. God certainly tells the truth.

The Chapter goes on to tell more of what they will do after the Muslim fighters return home: *They swear to you so that you will be well-pleased with them. So while you be well-pleased with them, then, truly, God is not well-pleased with the folk, the ones who disobey.* **(9:96)** They first request the Muslims to overlook what they have done. Then, they gradually ask for more, trying to make the Muslims feel easy with them so that they can secure their own safety within the community. They want to ensure that the Muslims continue to accept their outward appearances, treating them on that basis, and not mounting a campaign against them as God has ordered them in this final, definitive description of relations between Muslims and hypocrites.

### A MOSQUE FOR THE HYPOCRITES

This new passage **(9:97-9:99)** gives an account of the different groups and classes that lived within the Muslim community at the time of the Tabuk Expedition. It describes those groups which were part of its overall structure and their true attitudes to faith as well as

their deeds and distinctive characteristics.

The stubborn opposition of the idolaters continued to act as a barrier preventing the advance of the Quranic message into the rest of Arabia. The idolaters tribe had the ultimate say in all religious matters in Arabia, and it exercised a very strong influence over economic, political and social matters. Therefore its determined and uncompromising opposition to the new faith ensured that the rest of Arabia turned away from it, or at least adopted a wait-and-see attitude until the fight between the idolaters and one of its children had produced a clear winner. When the idolaters declared its submission, followed by the major tribes of Hawazin and Thaqif, and when the three main Jewish tribes in Madinah had previously been subdued, and those of Khaybar had been defeated, people embraced the new faith in flocks. The whole of Arabia submitted to the Quranic message within one year.

This rapid expansion in the geographical area of the Quranic message heralded the resurgence, on an even more intensive scale, of all the symptoms experienced after the resounding victory the Muslims achieved in the Battle of Badr. The Muslim community had almost managed to rid itself of those, thanks to the seven-year-long education process it had enjoyed after that battle. The rapid geographical expansion of the Quranic message in Arabia could have had some serious negative effects, had it not been for the fact that Madinah had become, in its entirety, the solid base of the Quranic message. It was God Almighty who looked after the new faith and charted its course. He had prepared the first core of believers, the Emigrants and the Helpers, to be the first solid base of the Quranic message after the relatively important expansion that followed the victory at Badr. He also made the whole of Madinah the solid base which would withstand the great expansion brought about by the splendid triumph achieved when Makkah was won over to the Quranic message. God certainly knows what forces to mobilize in support of His message.

The first symptom of the new dangers appeared on the day of the Battle of Hunayn, mentioned in this Chapter: **(9:25-9:26)** One of the apparent reasons for the defeat at the beginning of the battle was that 2,000 of those the Messenger had pardoned in Makkah, and who embraced the Quranic message after the fall of that city, had joined the 10,000-strong army which originally travelled from Madinah to subdue the idolaters in Makkah. The presence of those 2,000 men alongside the others who came from Madinah was a cause of imbalance in the Muslim ranks. There was also the fact that the Hawazin took the Muslims by surprise. What that meant was that the army did

not wholly belong to the solid, well-knit base which had been nurtured over the several years separating the Battle of Badr and the conquest of Makkah.

Similarly, the negative symptoms that appeared at the time of the Tabuk Expedition were a natural result of this rapid expansion and the great influx of new Muslims with varying standards of faith. These symptoms are discussed fully in this Chapter in a long exposition with varied styles and methods of treatment.

### WHERE HYPOCRISY IS HARDEST

Bearing this in mind, we can now discuss the signs included in this passage: **(9:97-9:99)**

These signs begin with mentioning different classes of desert Arabs, some of whose tribes lived close to Madinah. Earlier, they had attacked the land of the Quranic message in Madinah, but later, when they accepted the Quranic message, they belonged to either one of the two groups mentioned in this passage. The descriptive outline of these groups begins with establishing a rule about their general nature: *The nomads are stauncher in ingratitude and hypocrisy and more likely not to know the ordinances that God caused to descend to His Messenger.* **(9:97)**

*And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:97)** He knows His creation, their circumstances, characteristics and nature. He has given them a variety of talents, capabilities and specialities, and He made them into races, communities and nations. All this is in manifestation of His wisdom.

### THE GAP SEPARATING FAITH AND HYPOCRISY

Having given a general description of the desert Arabs, the Chapter classifies them further on the basis of what changes in their characteristics the faith has produced, and the gap that has emerged between hearts that have experienced the happiness generated by faith and those that remained unbelieving, hypocritical. This description is drawn against the background of the situation of the Muslim community at that time: *And of the nomads are some who take what they spend to themselves as something owed them and await for some turn of your fortunes. Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune. And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(9:98)** Most probably the hypocrites among the desert people are mentioned first in order to group them with the hypocrites in Madinah who were the subject of discussion in the previous passage. This complements the discussion of hypocrites from both areas.

Such a person needs to give some of his money in *zakat* and to

contribute to the jihad campaigns. In this way he gives evidence of his being a Muslim and is thus able to enjoy the comforts of life in the Muslim community. He is also able to win favor with the Muslims who were the major power in Arabia. To him, what he spends is a clear loss which he is forced to pay. He does not give it out of any good will towards the Quranic message or the Muslims. He does not like that they are victorious. Indeed his real attitude is quite different. He *awaits for some turn of your fortunes* **(9:98)** He would love to see the Muslims return from battle soundly defeated. He would be thrilled if misfortune befell them.

Therefore a supplication against them is stated here. A supplication by God signifies certainty. Therefore the supplication is given here in the form of a statement: *Theirs will be the reprehensible turn of fortune. .* **(9:98)** The Arabic expression describes evil as if it has a circle which closes in on them and from which they can have no escape. It turns them round and they are seized in the middle with no let up. This abstract notion, described in vivid and concrete terms, brings the meaning closer to our minds. *And God is Hearing, Knowing* **(9:98)** His hearing and knowledge are attributes which fit in perfectly with the atmosphere of ill intention, the waiting for misfortune to befall the Muslim community, and the hypocrisy that fills their hearts, although they try hard to conceal it. God certainly hears what they say, and He knows what they hide and what they keep in the open.

Another group however have experienced the happiness and delight that come with faith: *And of the nomads are some who believe in God and the Last Day and take for himself what he spends—as an offering to God—and blessings of the Messenger that will be sent for them. No doubt these are not but an offering from them.* **(9:99)** What motivates these people to spend their money is their belief in God and the Day of Judgement. They have no fear of people, and they feel no need to flatter those in power. They make no calculation of profit and loss which they are likely to make in this world.

This group of believers wish that what they spend of their wealth will bring them closer to God and are eager to be remembered in the Messenger's prayers. That remembrance would demonstrate that he is pleased with them. His prayers are certainly answered by God as he devotes them to believers who spend their money for God's sake. The Chapter states clearly that what they give is indeed a means to give them what they wish of being close to God: *God will cause them to enter into His mercy.* **(9:99)** Again mercy is described in rather concrete terms to set it in contrast with the evil turn'. Mercy is described here as if it is a house into which they are admitted. *Truly,*

*God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* **(9:99)** He accepts repentance and charity. He forgives past sins and bestows His mercy on those who seek it.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Clearly identify the assumptions the Quranic signs express and determine whether they show a sense of justice.
Consider how these assumptions are shaping your point of view.
Assumptions are beliefs you take for granted.
If this was the evidence, and this the conclusion, what was assumed?
Or: If this is what he saw (heard, etc.), and this is what he concluded?
Or thought, what did he assume?
Why do people assume this?
Have you ever made this assumption?
What could be assumed instead?
Is this belief true? Sometimes true? Seldom true? Always false? (give examples.)
Can you think of reasons for this belief? Against it?
What, if anything, can we conclude about this assumption?
What would we need to find out to be able to judge it?
How would someone who makes this assumption act?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I found that sometimes I am not fair-minded.
I was able to contrast the reasoning of a believer and an ungrateful person based on Quranic signs.
I gained insight into fair-mindedness and developing a sense of justice when I considered multiple points of view

## Lesson 113(13). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Logic (being reasonable)

Logic is a word that has many meanings and uses:

1) Correct reasoning or the study of correct reasoning and its foundations.
2) The relationships between propositions (supports, assumes, implies, contradicts, counts against, is relevant to).
3) The system of principles, concepts, and assumptions that are the basis for Quranic Studies.
4) Reasoning that bears upon the truth or justification of any belief or set of beliefs.
5) Reasoning that bears upon an answer to any question or set of questions.

The word logic relates to the question of explanation. As human thought and behavior is to some extent based on logic rather than instinct, we try to figure things out using ideas, meanings, and thought. Such intellectual behavior inevitably involves logic or considerations of a logical sort: some sense of what is relevant and irrelevant, of what supports and what counts against a belief, of what we should and should not assume, of what we should and should not claim, of what we do and do not know, of what is and is not implied, of what does and does not contradict, of what we should or should not do or believe.

Concepts have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions und which they do and do not apply, of what is relevant or irrelevant to them, c what they do or don't imply, etc. Questions have a logic in that we can investigate the conditions under which they can be settled. Quranic Studies has a logic in that the Quran has purposes and a set of logical structures that bear upon those purposes: assumptions, concepts, issues, data, theories, claims, implications, consequences, etc.

The concept of logic also plays an essential role in critical thinking. Unfortunately, it takes a considerable length of time before most people become comfortable with its many uses. In part, this is due to people's failure to study their own thinking in keeping with the standards of reason and logic. This is not to deny, of course, that logic is involved in all human thinking. It is rather to say that the logic we use is often implicit, unexpressed, and sometimes contradictory.

According to the Quran to be logical is to be "reasonable" (*'aqala*), to use one's intellect (*'aql*). This course in Quranic Studies is to learn from Quranic logic. Events described in the Quran do not just happen. The sacred text's description of events make sense when you understand its meaning.

Questions should be asked with a method to them. Teachers should help students figure out the logic behind the sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*). Their answers should always reference particular Quranic signs. How they learn to support their answers by giving reasons and references to the sign(s) is important, not any specific answer that they give.

In many cases, Quranic learning has been through rote memorization and drills based on having memorized the signs. When students learn through this method, they are not logically informed as to what the Quranic signs are saying. They are learning only by association or rote memorization without connecting the revelation to how they think or how they chose to live their life. As a result, students learn to think of the Quranic text as something they simply memorize without ever understanding the meaning of what it says. In doing so, they do not integrate the meanings of the Quranic message into their lives, they do not "own" it. They rarely relate, that is, make relevant, what they have memorized to their own experience nor are they able to critique each by means of the other. They rarely try to test by making it a part of their everyday life. They rarely ask questions such as:

Why is this so? How does this relate to what I already know?
How does this relate to what I am learning in other classes?

With the method of memorization of the sacred text, very few students ever think that they need to implement what they are learning in their life nor have they learned how to do so.

The Quranic vision of knowledge may be characterized as knowledge that is founded in understanding (*fahm*) and insight (*tafaqquh*). This is indicated in the numerous references in the text which encourage rational observation, thought, and reflection on the observable world and the universe beyond. It is knowledge mixed with insight that the Quran has visualized in its expression (*al-tafaqquh fi 'l-din*), that is, "understands the religion." This means as a reasonable approach filled with curiosity to constructing a worldview of the Quranic message.The Quranic message, in other words, advises knowledge through analysis and understanding that generate insight rather than a purely rigid and authoritarian approach that teaches blind certainty and a closed-mindedness that results in an imprisonment of the mind so complete that the prisoner does not even know that his or her mind has been imprisoned. The two approaches are reflected in the familiar expressions: Faith based on detailed analysis (*al-iman al-tafsilli*) as opposed to undigested and uncomprehended faith (*al-iman al-ijmali*). The former is preferred by common acknowledgement of the clerics of all the leading schools of thought.[1]

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:100-9:110

**Madinah:** *As for the forerunners,*
*the ones who take the lead*
*among the ones who emigrate*
*and the helpers and those who followed them with kindness,*
*God was well-pleased with them*
*and they were well-pleased with Him.*
*He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run,*
*ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally.*
*That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* (9:100)
*And from around you of the nomads are ones who are hypocrites.*
*And from among the people of the city,*
*some grew bold in hypocrisy.*
***You** have not known them but We know them.*
*We will, truly, punish them two times in this world.*
*Again, they will be returned to a tremendous punishment.* (9:101)
*And others acknowledged their impieties.*
*They mixed actions, ones in accord with morality*
*with others that are bad deeds.*
*Perhaps God will turn to them in forgiveness.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (9:102)
*Take charity from their wealth to purify them*
*and make them pure with it.*
*And invoke blessings for them.*
*Truly, thy entreaties will bring a sense of comfort and rest to them.*
*And God is Hearing, Knowing.* (9:103)
*Know they not that God is He*
*Who accepts remorse from His servants and takes charities*
*and that God, He is The Accepter of Repentance,*
*The Compassionate?* (9:104)
*And say: Act!*
*God will consider your actions and so will His Messenger*
*and the ones who believe.*
*And you will be returned to Him,*
*One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible.*
*Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* (9:105)
*And there are others, ones who are waiting in suspense*
*for the command of God.*
*Either He will punish them*
*or He will turn to them in forgiveness.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:106)
*Mention those who took to themselves places of prostration*

*by injuring and in ingratitude and separating and dividing*
*between the ones who believe*
*and as a stalking place for whoever warred*
*against God and His Messenger before.*
*And they will, certainly, swear that:*
*We wanted nothing but the fairer.*
*And God bears witness that they are,*
*truly, ones who lie.* (9:107)
*And stand not up in it ever!*
*A place of prostration that was founded from the first day*
*on God-consciousness*
*is more rightful that you have stood up in it.*
*In it are men who love to cleanse themselves.*
*And God loves the ones who cleanse themselves.* (9:108)
*Is one who founded his structure on the consciousness of God*
*and His contentment better than he*
*who founded his structure*
*on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river*
*so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell?*
*And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust!* (9:109)
*The structure they built will cease not the skepticism in their hearts*
*until their hearts are cut asunder.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (9:110)

## COMMENTARY°

### THOSE WHO LEAD THE WAY

Having classified the desert Arabs, now the Chapter classifies the whole community, in urban and desert areas alike, into four groupings: the vanguard who took the lead among the Emigrants and the Helpers as well as those who followed in their footsteps, those who were hardened in their hypocrisy whether they lived in Madinah or in the desert nearby, those who combined good deeds with bad ones, and those whose cases were deferred for judgement. These groups are outlined in the following signs:

It appears that these signs **(9:100-9:106)**, making this classification, were revealed after the Messenger's return from Tabuk. By that time, different people, most of whom were hypocrites, had presented their excuses. The true believers who did not join the expedition made their real regret apparent, and some of them tied themselves to a pillar in the mosque declaring that they would not release themselves until the Messenger himself released them. Others did not make any excuses, hoping that God would accept their sincere repentance. These were three of the Messenger's Companions

whose cases were not settled until God accepted their repentance, as will be discussed in full in Chapter 7. Together these groups represented the total variety of people around the Muslim area in Arabia after the expedition. God wanted to reveal the whole of the battlefield in front of His Messenger and the true believers with him. They would then understand the situation that prevailed at the time, which was close to the end of the first epoch, close to the time and birth place of this religion of the Quranic message.

Such a revelation was necessary before the Quranic message made its move to liberate the whole of humanity throughout the globe. All communities needed to be liberated from serving any deities other than God, and from submitting themselves to anyone beside God. Before making such a move, the Muslim community needed to fully understand the prevailing situation so that it would be able to chart its course of action with clarity and a thorough perception of what was needed.

*As for the forerunners, the ones who take the lead among the ones who emigrate and the helpers and those who followed them with kindness,* **(9:100)** This class of Muslims, with its three groupings, the Emigrants, the Helpers and those who followed closely in their footsteps, formed the hard core of the Muslim community in Arabia after the conquest of Makkah. This was the group that ensured the unity of the Muslim community in every hardship as well as every period of ease and comfort. It is often the case that a trial of ease and comfort is more difficult to overcome than a trial of hardship.

This account clearly shows the position of the Emigrants and the Helpers and those who followed them with regard to their strength of faith and readiness to sacrifice their all for God's cause. Theirs is a highly significant role in the building of the structure of the Muslim community and giving the message of the Quranic message a practical manifestation. Their role will continue to influence every group of people who want to live their lives in accordance with the teachings of the Quranic message.

*God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* **(9:100)** That God is pleased with them means that He will be rewarding them generously. Indeed His pleasure with them is the highest reward to which they may aspire. That they are pleased with Him means that they are reassured by being on His side, confident that whatever He determines for them is right and good. They are grateful when they receive His bounty and they remain steadfast when they endure hardship. However, usage of the term

"well pleased" in both conditions imparts an air of total happiness, which is mutual between God and this elite group of His servants. It elevates this group to a high position in which they reciprocate God's feelings towards them when He is their supreme Lord and they are His servants whom He created. Language cannot adequately describe such a situation; it is merely felt as we read the Quranic expression and reflect on it with an open mind and a spirit that aspires to the sublime.

That is their situation with their Lord. It is a permanent situation: *God was well-pleased with them and they were well-pleased with Him. He prepared for them Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. That is the winning of the sublime triumph.* **(9:100)** What triumph can be greater than this? It is indeed the supreme triumph.

### MIXING GOOD DEEDS WITH BAD ONES

The second group is in total contrast with the one we have just described: *And from around you of the nomads are ones who are hypocrites. And from among the people of the city, some grew bold in hypocrisy.* **(9:101)** We have discussed at length the nature of the hypocrites, whether they lived in Madinah or in the Arabian desert. The Chapter has given numerous examples of their attitude. Here, however, it points to a special type of hypocrite who acquired great skill in hiding their true attitude to the extent that they remain unknown to the Messenger, despite his profound insight and great experience. What is so special about such hypocrites?

God declares that such hypocrites were in Madinah, as well as among the nearby desert Arabs. He reassures His Messenger and the believers that the hypocrites' scheming will come to nothing. He also warns the hypocrites who were adept at hiding their true position that they will not escape God's punishment. Indeed their punishment will be doubled in this life as well as in the life to come. *You have not known them but We know them. We will, truly, punish them two times in this world. Again, they will be returned to a tremendous punishment.* **(9:101)** Perhaps the closest interpretation of the double punishment in this life is that they worry lest their reality be discovered by the Muslim community, and the punishment inflicted on them by the angels when they gather their souls, hitting them on their faces and backs. Alternatively, it refers to the pain they feel when they see the Muslims triumph over the forces of falsehood and their fear lest their true feelings are discovered. God knows best the precise meaning of His statement.

If those were the two extreme groups, there is a third one in be-

tween: **(9:102-9:105)**

The fact that God instructs His Messenger to take a certain action with this group suggests that they were known in person to the Messenger. It is reported that these signs refer to a particular group who did not join the Messenger on the Tabuk Expedition, but soon regretted their action, admitted their guilt and repented. Their bad action was to stay behind, and their good action was their regret and repentance.

Having described this group of people who regretted their staying behind and repented having done so, the Chapter goes on to say: *And others acknowledged their impieties. They mixed actions, ones in accord with morality with others that are bad deeds. Perhaps God will turn to them in forgiveness. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.***(9:102)**

God says to His Messenger, Muhammad: *Take charity from their wealth to purify them and make them pure with it. And invoke blessings for them. Truly, your entreaties will bring a sense of comfort and rest to them.* **(9:103)** Those were people with alert consciences which prompted their regret and repentance for what they had done. Therefore they deserved to be reassured and to receive the sympathy which opened up for them hopeful prospects. As the Messenger was molding a whole community and establishing a system, he felt he needed to wait for instructions from God regarding their cases.

Thus we see how God favored them with His acceptance as He knew that they were good at heart, sincere in their repentance. He ordered His Messenger to take some of their money for charitable uses, and to pray for them. Taking charity from them brought them back as full members of the Muslim community. They could once again share in its duties and participate in meeting its responsibilities. They were thus neither rejected nor expelled. Their charitable donation added to the purity of their hearts. The Messenger's prayer on their behalf gave them reassurance.

*And God is Hearing, Knowing.* **(9:103)** He hears supplications and prayers, and He knows what is in peoples' hearts. He judges all in accordance with what He hears and knows, for He is indeed the One who hears all and knows all. It is He who makes the final judgement on His servants, accepting their repentance and their charity. His Messenger, the Messenger Muhammad, carries out what God commands. He does not initiate any part of this himself.

To establish this fact God says in the following sign: *Know they not that God is He Who accepts remorse from His servants and takes charities and that God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate?* **(9:104)** This is a form of question which signifies an

emphatic statement, meaning: let them know that it is God who accepts repentance, takes charitable offerings and bestows mercy on His servants. None of this belongs to anyone beside God.

Finally those who had repented after they had stayed behind are addressed directly: *And say: Act! God will consider your actions and so will His Messenger and the ones who believe. And you will be returned to Him, One Who Knows of the unseen and the visible. Then, He will tell you what you had been doing.* **(9:105)** The Quranic system is based on faith as well as action that gives credence to professed beliefs. The real proof of their repentance is their action which is apparent to all. It is seen by God, His Messenger and the believers. In the hereafter, they are returned to the One whose knowledge encompasses what is manifest and what is thought to be hidden, as well as physical actions and inner feelings.

Regretting slips and mistakes and repenting past errors do not represent the end. It is the action that follows such repentance that counts. It may either give credence to such feelings of regret and build new actions on their basis or undermine them and deprive them of their value.

The Quranic message is a practical code of living in which feelings and intentions count for little unless they are transformed into real action. A good intention has its place, but the final verdict is not determined on its basis. A good intention is added to the action following it in order to determine its value. This is the import of the hadith in which the Messenger says: "Actions are but by intentions." So intention on its own is of little value unless it is acted upon.

### AWAITING GOD'S JUDGEMENT

The fourth group of people in the society that lived in Madinah and its surrounding area at the time of the revelation of this Chapter are left to God to judge in their case: *And there are others, ones who are waiting in suspense for the command of God. Either He will punish them or He will turn to them in forgiveness. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:106)**

This is the fourth group of people who did not join the expedition, and whose cases were deferred for judgement. These were different from the hypocrites, the apologetic, and the repentant who admitted their error. Until the revelation of these signs, nothing had been determined in the case of this group. Their cases were left to God for judgement. Neither they nor anyone else were aware of what decision would be taken.

### A MOSQUE TO PROMOTE UNBELIEF

The story of this mosque: *Mention those who took to themselves places of prostration by injuring and in ingratitude and separating and dividing between the ones who believe and as a stalking place for whoever warred against God and His Messenger before. And they will, certainly, swear that: We wanted nothing but the fairer. And God bears witness that they are, truly, ones who lie.* **(9:107)** intended for mischief is prominent in the events of the expedition to Tabuk. This is the reason for making specific mention of the hypocrites who built it. Their case is discussed at length after completing the discussion of the various groups of people in the Muslim society at the time.

This evil man dug large holes in the ground in the area separating the two hosts. The Messenger fell into one of them and received an injury to his face, and his right lower front tooth was broken. There was a cut on his forehead. At the beginning of the battle, Abu mir stepped forward and addressed his clansmen among the Helpers, calling on them to support him. When they recognized him and understood his purpose, they abused him, describing him as an enemy of God. He went back to the idolaters saying some evil had befallen his people after he had left them.

Before Abu Amir left Madinah, the Messenger had called on him to believe in God and he recited the Quran to him, but he stubbornly refused. The Messenger then prayed that he would die in a far away land, without support. That was indeed his end. When the Battle o Uhud was over and the Muslims were able to overcome its effect he felt that the Messenger would move from strength to strength. H then fled to join Hercules, the Byzantine Emperor, and tried to persuade him to fight the Messenger. He promised him something to satisfy him and Abu mir stayed in his court. He started to write to a group of hypocrites from his tribe, promising them that he would come at the head of a large army to defeat the Messenger. He asked them to establish an outpost where anyone he would be sending could stay, and where he himself would establish residence when he came. They started to build what ostensibly was a mosque at a place not far away from the Quba' Mosque.

The building was completed before the Messenger marched towards Tabuk. The hypocrites who built it came to the Messenger and asked him to come over and pray in their mosque, hoping that they would use that prayer as an endorsement of their action. They told the Messenger that they intended it to be used by the weak and the ill on a rainy night. However, God protected him against praying in such a place. He said to them: We have embarked on a travel. So let it be until we come back, God willing. When the Messenger was on his way back from Tabuk, and at a distance of one day's travel from

Madinah, or even less, the Angel Gabriel came down with the true story of this mosque intended for evil and to sow seeds of discord among the believers who used to pray in the Quba Mosque which was founded right from the first day on piety. The Messenger dispatched some of his Companions to pull this other mosque down before he arrived in Madinah.

This is then the story of the mosque which was built by the hypocrites to further their designs against the Quranic message. The Messenger was instructed not to pray there, but to pray in the first mosque built in the Quranic period, i.e. the Quba' Mosque: *And stand not up in it ever! A place of prostration that was founded from the first day on God-consciousness is more rightful that you have stood up in it. In it are men who love to cleanse themselves. And God loves the ones who cleanse themselves.* **(9:108)**

## HOUSES OF FALSE WORSHIP

It was then at the time of the Messenger that a mosque for mischief making was built by the hypocrites, intended to scheme against the Quranic message and to undermine the position of the Muslims. Its purpose was to promote unbelief and to provide a cover for those who plotted against the Muslim community, co-operating with the enemies of the Quranic message while pretending to be believers. The same types of mosque are still being established in a great variety of forms, making use of advanced evil. These may take the form of an activity which ostensibly seeks to promote the Quranic message, but works in reality to obliterate it or to deprive it of its true character. They may also establish regimes or social orders which raise a false religious banner, when in reality they undermine the Quranic message. They can also take the form of organizations, books and research which take on a religious guise in order to pacify those who feel ill at ease as they see the Quranic message being attacked by its enemies. These organizations and books try to quieten their worries, reassuring them that the Quranic message is still in a healthy position.

Because there are so many masks and disguised places of mischief, it is important that they should be known and identified. They should be made to appear in their rue colors, and their reality laid bare. If we do this, we will only be doing what was done to this mosque once its true nature was unmasked so clearly and powerfully: **(9:107-9:110)**

The inimitable Quranic style draws here a very vivid picture showing the end which awaits every deceptive structure built close to a real mosque or centre of piety, and intended to play the same

role as that of the first such mosque built by the hypocrites of Madinah. It reassures the true advocates of faith who are keen to purge themselves of the evil designs of the enemies of the Quranic message: *Is one who founded his structure on the God-consciousness of God and His contentment better than he who founded his structure on the brink of a crumbling, tottering bank of a river so that it tumbled with him into the fire of hell? And God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust!* **(9:109)**

This remarkably vivid scene which is full of movement is painted and brought alive with just a few words, which reassure the advocates of the truth that the scheming of the hypocrites and the ungrateful will come to nought. Thus those who build their structure on a proper foundation of fear of God will be able to face up to others who scheme against this religion of the Quranic message.

The Chapter paints another remarkable scene showing the effects on the evil builders of their deceptive structure: *The structure they built will cease not the skepticism in their hearts until their hearts are cut asunder. And God is Knowing, Wise.* **(9:110)** The edge has crumbled and the ill-intended structure built on it has collapsed and fallen into the precipice, into the fire of hell, and good riddance!

Yet the effects of that building remain in the hearts of its builders in the form of doubt, worry and confusion. It will continue to deprive them of any comfort and stability until their hearts are torn into pieces and collapse from their positions.

The image of a collapsing building is complementary to that o doubt, instability and worry. The first depicts a physical picture anc the other a mental one. Both are held side by side in the remarkable scene painted by the inimitable Quranic style. They also complement each other in practical human situations in every age. The deviant schemer will always be shaken, confused, unstable, worried lest his reality is unmasked. This is perhaps the secret of the surpassing excellence of the Quran. It depicts feelings with artistic beauty and remarkable complementarity and contrast. At the same time it maintains simplicity and clarity of expression and vividness in its imagery.

Beyond all this there is a definite purpose served by the unmasking of the true nature of the mosque built by the hypocrites, and by the classifying of the community into those levels of belief. Thus the path is charted for the Quranic movement and its field of operation is clearly drawn.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What does it mean to be a monotheist?
What does it mean to be reasonable?
How would explain these signs to someone else?
Does what you say follow from the evidence that the signs give?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to relate the content of the above signs to practical situations in my life.

I knew that I had connected the Quranic message when I was able to tell someone in my own words what this sign says.

## Lesson 113(14). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Definitiveness (to be precise)

Definitiveness means to be conclusive, final, ultimate, precise: (*muhkama*). Definitiveness indicates that something is exact and accurate. It is an important aspect of Quranic critical thinking. It is part of strategies such as clarifying issues, conclusions, or beliefs and clarifying and analyzing the meanings of words and phrases. Not only is definitive a standard to be used when analyzing the Quranic message, but in expressing the Quranic message as well. That is, precision of expression is implied in the above strategies and forms an important part of reasoned dialogue and dialectic.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)

## Signs 9:111-9:118

**Madinah:** *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe*
*themselves and their properties.*
*For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God*
*so they kill and are slain.*
*It is a promise rightfully on Him in the Torah and the Gospel*
*and the Quran.*
*And who is more true to His compact than God?*
*Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain*
*that you made in trading with Him*
*And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph* (9:111
*for the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise,*
*the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down,*
*the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command*
*that which is honorable*
*and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful,*
*and the ones who guard the ordinances of God,*
*and give you good tidings to the ones who believe!* (9:112)
*It had not been for the Messenger and those who believed*
*to ask for forgiveness for ones who are polytheists—*
*even if they had been imbued with kinship—*
*after it became clear to them*
*that they are the Companions of Hellfire.* (9:113)
*And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness*
*for his father only because of a promise he had promised him?*
*Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy*
*to God, he cleared himself from him.*
*Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* (9:114)
*God would not have been causing a folk to go astray*

*after He guided them until He makes manifest to them*
*of what they should be God-conscious.*
*Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* (9:115)
*Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion*
*of the heavens and the earth.*
*He gives life and He causes to die.*
*And there is not for you other than God,*
*either a protector or a helper.* (9:116)
*Certainly, God turned towards the Messenger*
*and the ones who emigrate and the helpers who followed him*
*in the hour of adversity after the hearts of a group of people*
*were about to swerve among them.*
*Again, He turned towards them.*
*Truly, He is Gentle, Compassionate.* (9:117)
*And upon the three who were left behind*
*when the earth became narrow for them*
*—for all its breadth—*
*and their souls became narrow for them*
*and they thought that there was no shelter from God,*
*but in Him, again, He turns to them in forgiveness*
*so that they would turn towards Him.*
*Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance,*
*The Compassionate.* (9:118)

## COMMENTARY°

### THE EARTH'S SUFFOCATING EXPANSE

This passage of the Chapter outlines a number of final rulings that govern the Muslim community's relations with other groups and communities. It starts with defining the relationship between a Muslim and his Lord, the nature of the Quranic message and an outline of the Quranic duties and methods of action.

• Embracing the Quranic message is described as a deal in which the buyer is God while the believer is the seller. Since it is a sale to God, believers have no say over anything in their lives. Neither their property nor their person can be withheld from serving God's cause. The final product is that God's word should be supreme, and all submission is made to God alone. The price a believer receives in this deal is admittance into heaven, which is far superior in value to the commodity he offers. Therefore, he receives it as a favor from God: *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain. It is a promise rightfully on Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Quran. And who is more true to His compact*

*than God? Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph* **(9:111)**

• The people who enter into this deal are a select few with distinctive qualities, some of which apply to them in their direct relationship with God, their feelings and the worship they offer. Their other qualities are concerned with the duties under this deal, which requires them to work for the establishment of the divine faith on earth, enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and to see to it that God's bounds are respected: *For the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise, the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful, and the ones who guard the ordinances of God, and give you good tidings to the ones who believe!* **(9:112)**

• The signs that follow in this passage show that relations between the believers who make this deal and all others, including their close relatives, are severed. The two groups move in opposite directions, towards opposite ends. Those who are party to this deal go to heaven, while the others go to hell. The two meet neither in this world nor in the next. Therefore, blood relationships cannot establish a bond between the two: "*It had not been for the Prophet and those who believed to ask for forgiveness for ones who are polytheists—even if they had been imbued with kinship—after it became clear t them that they are the Companions of Hellfire. And had not bee Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* **(9:113-9:114)**

• A believer's loyalty must be purely to God. It is on the basis of this unified loyalty that all ties and bonds are established. Here we have a clear statement by God clarifying all issues and leaving no room for error. It is more than enough for the believers that they have God's protection and support. With these promised by the One who is the master of the universe, they need nothing from anyone else: *God would not have been causing a folk to go astray after He guided them until He makes manifest to them of what they should be God-conscious. Truly, God is Knowing of everything. Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and He causes to die. And there is not for you other than God, either a protector or a helper.* **(9:115-9:116)**

• With the nature of the deal being such, reluctance to join an expedition serving God's cause is a very serious matter. However,

God has pardoned those whom He knew to have good intentions and a firm resolve to do their duty after having once failed. Thus, He turned to them in mercy: **(9:117-9:118)**

### A VERY SPECIAL CONTRACT

It is an inspiring sign **(9:111)**, revealing the nature of the relationship between the believers and God, and the nature of the deal they make with God when they adopt the Quranic message and which remains in force throughout their lives. Whoever makes this deal and remains true to it is the one who may truly be described as a believer reflecting the nature of faith. Otherwise his claim to be a believer remains short of proof.

The nature of this deal, or this contract of sale, as God graciously describes it, is that He has taken for Himself the souls and property of the believers, leaving them nothing of all that. They do not retain any part of that which they would feel too dear to sacrifice for His cause. They no longer have any choice whether to spend it in furthering His cause or not. It is indeed a deal that has been concluded and sealed. The buyer may do what He likes, as He pleases, with what He has bought. The seller has no option other than to fulfil the terms of the deal. He cannot argue or make any choices. He can only do what the deal specifies. The price given for this purchase is paradise, and the way to be followed by the sellers is that of jihad, fighting and sacrificing their lives, and the end result is either victory or martyrdom.

*Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain.* **(9:111)** Whoever is party to this deal, signing the contract, paying the price agreed is a true believer. It is with the believers that God has made this deal of purchase. He has bestowed His grace on them by specifying a price. He is, after all, the One who gives life and property to all His creation, and He has also given human beings the ability to make a choice. He then bestowed further grace on human beings by making them able to make contracts, even with God Himself, and holding them to their contracts. He makes the honoring of their contract an evidence of their humanity, while going back on it is evidence of sinking back to the level of animals, and the worst of animals:

It is indeed an awesome deal, but it remains binding on every believer who is able to honor its terms. He is not to be exempt from it unless he goes back on his faith. Therefore the sense of dread that I feel now as I am writing these words. *Truly, God bought from the ones who believe themselves and their properties. For them is the*

*Garden! They fight in the way of God so they kill and are slain.* **(9:111)** My Lord, we certainly need Your help.

The deal fills us with awe. Yet those who are claiming to be Muslims everywhere, from the far east to the far west are sitting idle, unwilling to strive hard in order to establish the fundamental truth of God's Lordship on earth, or to remove the tyranny which usurps the qualities of Lordship over human life on earth. They are unwilling to fight, kill and be killed for God's cause, and unwilling to undertake a struggle that does not involve fighting and sacrificing one's life.

*And who is more true to His compact than God?* **(9:111)** Indeed a promise by God is certain to be honored. No one fulfils his promises like He does.

### A True Promise and a Profitable Deal

*Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph* **(9:111)** Yes, people should rejoice at having dedicated their souls and their property for God's cause in return for admittance into heaven, as God Himself has promised. What does a believer miss out on when he honors his part of the deal? He certainly does not miss out on anything. He is certain to die anyway, and his wealth is certain to go, whether he spends it to serve God's cause or in any other way. Being in paradise is a great gain which a believer actually gets for nothing, since the price he offers would be gone anyway, whichever course of action he follows.

On its own this is a great victory, because it represents the fulfilment of man's humanity through his release from the burdens of his needs. When admittance to heaven is added as a reward, then the sale he has made calls for him to rejoice as it represents a great triumph indeed: *Then, rejoice in the good tidings of the bargain that you made in trading with Him. And that, it is the winning the sublime triumph.* **(9:111)**

### THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE BELIEVERS

*For the repentant worshippers, the ones who praise, the ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves, the ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful, and the ones who guard the ordinances of God, and give you good tidings to the ones who believe!* **(9:112)**

The first of these qualities is for: *the repentant worshippers,* They appeal to Him for forgiveness, regretting any slip they may make and resolving to turn to Him and follow His guidance in their

future days. They will not revert to sin. They will endeavour to do only good actions in order to make their repentance a reality. It is then a means of purging themselves of the effects of temptation and of mending their ways so that they can earn God's acceptance.

*The ones who praise,* **(9:112)** They submit and dedicate their worship to Him alone, acknowledging that He is God, the only Lord. This is a basic quality of theirs which is manifested by their worship, and also by their dedicating all their actions and statements to the pursuit of God's pleasure. Their worship, then, is meant as a practical confirmation of their belief in God's oneness. They praise God acknowledging His grace which He bestows on them. They praise Him continuously, in times of happiness and in times of adversity. When they are happy they praise God for His blessings, and when they go through difficult times they praise Him because they know that the difficulty is a test which they need to pass. They realize that God will show them His mercy when they prove their metal by going through the test with their faith unshaken. True praise is not that expressed only in times of ease and happiness. It is the praise genuinely expressed in times of adversity, recognizing that God, the Just and Merciful, would not put a believer through a trial unless it is eventually for his own good. A believer may not know that at the time, but God certainly knows it.

*The ones who are inclined to fasting, the ones who bow down, the ones who prostrate themselves,* **(9:112)** They attend to their prayers which becomes an essential part of their life. Praying is thus made one of their distinctive characteristics.

*The ones who command that which is honorable and the ones who prohibit that which is unlawful,* **(9:112)** When a Muslim community that conducts its life in accordance with God's law is established, making clear that it submits to God and no one else, then the quality of enjoining the doing of what is right and forbidding what is wrong is seen to be fully operative within this community. It addresses any errors of implementation of, or deviation from, the code of living God has revealed. But when there is no the Quranic community which gives supremacy to the implementation of God's law, then this quality of enjoining what is right should be addressed totally to the most important thing, which is acceptance of God's oneness, submission to His authority and the establishment of a truly the Quranic community.

*And the ones who guard the ordinances of God* **(9:112)** That is to say, they make sure of the implementation of God's law in their own life and in the life of the community, and they resist anyone who tries to forestall it. Like the previous one, this quality can only work

in a Muslim community governed by God's law in all its affairs. By definition, such a community acknowledges God's sovereignty as the only God, Lord and Legislator, and rejects any authority which seeks to implement laws that are not revealed by God. Efforts must concentrate first of all on the establishment of such a community. Only when it comes into being, will those who "keep within the limits set out by God" have their rightful place in it, as happened in the first the Quranic community.

### AN EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW

The believers whose lives and property God has bought in return for His promise to admit them to paradise are a unique community, because faith is their only bond which unites them and makes of them a well-knit community. This Chapter which outlines the relationship between the Muslim community and others who do not belong to it also makes a final judgement in respect of relationships not based on this bond, particularly after the rapid expansion of the Muslim community following the conquest of Makkah, when large numbers of people embraced the Quranic message without being fundamentally affected by its way of life. They continued to attach great importance to blood relations. The signs that follow sever the ties that existed in the past between the believers who have made this deal and those who have not taken part in it, even though they may be related to them by blood. This is because they have two different courses to follow and two widely different ends in the hereafter. **(9:113-3:116)**

Faith is the great bond that regulates all human bonds and relationships. If it is severed then all other bonds are uprooted. There can be no more value for bonds of blood or marriage relationships, or bonds of race and nationality. It is either that faith unites people and maintains their bonds, or there are no relationships when faith does not exist: *And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* **(9:114)**

*Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* **(9:114)** He used to pray to God very often and with great sincerity. He was also clement and he would forgive those who treated him badly. His father ill-treated him but he was forbearing. Yet only when he realized that there was no hope that he would ever believe in God, did he give up on him.

It has been reported that when these signs were revealed those believers who were in the habit of praying for the forgiveness of their

relatives feared that they might have gone far astray because their action was against God's law. The following sign was then revealed to reassure them that no punishment could be incurred prior to a clear definition of error: *God would not have been causing a folk to go astray after He guided them until He makes manifest to them of what they should be God-conscious. Truly, God is Knowing of everything.* **(9:115)**

At the end of this passage, in an atmosphere which calls for abandoning blood ties and being ready to sacrifice one's life and property, the Chapter makes a clear statement that it is God alone who protects and supports the believers. He is the One who has sovereignty over the heavens and the earth and it is He who controls life and death: *Truly, God, to Him belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. He gives life and He causes to die. And there is not for you other than God, either a protector or a helper.* **(9:116)** All property, all human beings and all creation, the heavens and the earth, life and death, support and protection are all in God's hands. To maintain a strong tie with Him is sufficient for anyone.

### ACCEPTANCE OF REPENTANCE

With the nature of the deal between God and the believers being such, to refrain from joining a jihad campaign by people who are able to do so is a very serious matter indeed. Therefore it was necessary to examine why some people were reluctant to join such an expedition. The passage we are looking at explains how much grace God bestows on the believers, overlooking their hesitation and their slips, serious as these may be. It also speaks of the three people whose cases were deferred for judgement. **(9:117-9:118)**

As for turning in mercy to the Emigrants and the Helpers, the sign outlines its causes. They are the ones who *certainly, God turned towards the Prophet and the ones who emigrate and the helpers who followed him in the hour of adversity after the hearts of a group of people were about to swerve among them. Again, He turned towards them. Truly, He is Gentle, Compassionate.* **(9:117)** Some of them were slow to join the Muslim army, but they joined as it marched, as will be given in detail. These were among the most sincere of believers. Others listened to the hypocrites as they tried to dissuade the believers from going out to confront the Byzantines whom they described as fearsome fighters. Those, however, joined the army after their initial reluctance.

### THE WHOLE WORLD SEEMS TOO NARROW

The story of the three people who remained behind until God

accepted their repentance are referred to in **(9:118)**. We have highlighted some of the impressions it gives us of the life of the early Muslim community and its values. As related by one of the three people who went through its experience, the story brings clear before our minds the meaning of the sign which states: *And upon the three who were left behind when the earth became narrow for them—for all its breadth—and their souls became narrow for them and they thought that there was no shelter from God, but in Him, again, He turns to them in forgiveness so that they would turn towards Him. Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate.* **(9:118)**

*When the earth became narrow for them—for all its breadth.* **(9:118)** What is the earth? Its world is that of its inhabitants and the values that are upheld by them. Its expanse is as vast as the relationships between its people make it to be. Therefore the description here is very truthful in its practical significance, as much as it is truthful in its artistic beauty. It shows the whole expanse of the earth becoming too narrow for those three. Its outer limits are brought too near to make it extremely tight, closing in on them. *And their souls became narrow for them.* **(9:118)** It is as if their souls are a sort of a container that has become too small and tight. They can hardl breathe as it tightens over them. What happened then was that *The thought that there was no shelter from God, but in Him.* **(9:118)** Tha applies to all creation. None can have any refuge from God except in Him, because He has power over the whole universe. Yet stating this fact at this point, in an atmosphere of sadness imparts an air of stress and despair that can only be cleared by God Himself.

Then hope is restored and release is granted: *again, He turns to them in forgiveness so that they would turn towards Him. Truly, God, He is The Accepter of Repentance, The Compassionate.* **(9:118)** He has turned to them in mercy with regard to this particular error, so that they might make a general repentance which covers all their past sins. This means that they would watch God eagerly to guard against any future error.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** (consequences). We use **vocabulary** (concepts, ideas and theories) to **interpret facts** (data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

## DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS
## LEARNING TO THINK QURANICALLY

I tried using writing as a way to learn by writing summaries in my own words of important points from the Quranic signs here.
I was able to formulate test questions.
I wrote out answers to my own questions.
I was able to get in touch with my emotions.
I learned that whenever I feel some negative emotion, I ask myself:
What, exactly, is the thinking leading to this emotion?
For example, if I are angry, ask myself, what is the thinking that is making me angry?
What other ways could I think about this situation?
For example, can I think about the situation so as to see the humor in it and what is pitiable in it?
If I can, concentrate on that thinking and my emotions, I will (eventually) shift to match them.

## Lesson 113(15). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard
## Connecting Complexities and Interrelationships

To connect complexities and interrelationships is an intellectual standard for critical thinking. This relates to the complexities and interrelationships between and among the Quranic verses. They require you to think beneath the surface of what the section or sign is saying. Exploring the Quranic message in the classroom depends on the quality of commitment of you and your classmates to develop your ability to discern the depth of what you are studying.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:119-9:122

**Madinah:** *O those who believed!*
*Be conscious of God and be with the ones who are sincere.* (9:119)
*It had not been for the people of the city*
*and among the nomads around them*
*to stay behind from the Messenger of God*
*nor prefer themselves more than himself.*
*That is because they were neither lit on by thirst*
*nor fatigue nor emptiness in the way of God*
*nor tread they any treading on any ground*
*—enraging the ones who are ungrateful—*
*nor glean any gleaning of ground against the enemy*
*but as an action in accord with morality*
*written down for them.*
*Truly, God wastes not the compensation*
*of the ones who are doers of good.* (9:120)
*Nor spend they contributions—be they small or great—*
*nor cross they over a valley, but it was written down for them*
*that God will give recompense to them*
*for the fairer of what they had been doing.* (9:121)
*And it had not been for the ones who believe*
*to move forward collectively.*
*If every band moved not forward of them*
*but a section of people only,*
*that they become learned in the way of life*
*and that they warn their folk when they returned to them*
*so that perhaps they will beware?* (9:122)

### Commentary°

• This is followed by a clear definition of the duties of the people

of Madinah and the Bedouins that live nearby on account of' their pledges given to the Messenger. It should be remembered that those formed the solid base of the Muslim community that was the standard-bearer of the Quranic message. Strong objections are raised to staying behind, coupled with a clear statement of the terms of the deal and the actions to be taken in fulfilment of those pledges **(9:120-9:121)**

• This encouragement to go forth on jihad for God's cause is coupled with a clarification that shows the limits of general mobilization, particularly after the land area of the Muslim state had become much bigger and the number of Muslims increased manifold. It is now feasible that only some of them should go to fight the enemy and acquire a more profound knowledge of the faith. The rest should stay behind to look after the needs of the community, provide logistic support and discharge other duties. All these efforts converge at the end: **(9:122)**

### A REWARD FOR EVERY LITTLE THING

The element of truth is highly significant in the story of those three Companions of the Messenger. To give this element its due importance, all believers are advised to fear God and to align themselves with those truthful people of the early believers. On the other hand those people in Madinah and the surrounding desert who stayed behind are strongly criticized. This is followed by a promise of generous reward to those who strive for God's cause: **(9:119-9:121)**

The people of Madinah were the ones who rushed to support the Quranic message, which meant that they were truly its basic core of supporters. They had given shelter to God's Messenger, pledged their total loyalty to him and constituted the hard nucleus of the Quranic faith in the Arabian Peninsula. The bedouin Arabs in the surrounding area, having also adopted the Quranic message as a faith and a way of life, formed the outer belt of defense. Therefore those two groups could not refrain from joining the Messenger or spare themselves from any risk to which they might be exposed. When God's Messenger set out to attend to a certain task that served the Quranic interests, then the people of Madinah, the vanguard of the Quranic message, and those of the surrounding area could not but join him. Whether this happened to be in the burning summer heat or the extreme winter cold, in times of strict hardship or easy affluence, it does not behoove them, being so close to the Messenger, to try to spare themselves a difficulty that God's Messenger is undertaking. They could not excuse themselves by protesting ignorance or lack of awareness of the real task in hand.

The Chapter appeals to them to fear God and to join the truthful believers who have never entertained any thoughts of staying behind and who have maintained their strong commitment to their faith at times of hardship. Those were the cream among the early believers and those who followed in their footsteps: *O those who believed! Be God-conscious and be with the ones who are sincere.* **(9:119)**

The Chapter follows this appeal by a strong censure of the very thought of staying behind when God's Messenger is setting out: *It had not been for the people of the city and among the nomads around them to stay behind from the Messenger of God nor prefer themselves more than himself. That is because they were neither lit on by thirst nor fatigue nor emptiness in the way of God nor tread they any treading on any ground—enraging the ones who are ungrateful—nor glean any gleaning of ground against the enemy but as an action in accord with morality written down for them. Truly, God wastes not the compensation of the ones who are doers of good.* **(9:120)** The statement implies a strong reproach. No Companion of God's Messenger can be reproached in a stronger way than by saying that he puts his own safety ahead of the Messenger's. How could he when he is the Messenger's Companion and follower? The same applies to the advocates of the Quranic message in all generations and periods. It does not behoove a believer to try to spare himself a risk that the Messenger himself was willing to undertake for the cause of the Quranic message. How could he when he claims that he is an advocate of the cause of the Quranic message, and a follower of the Messenger Muhammad?

Taking up such a responsibility is a duty imposed by God's orde and emphasized by our love of the Messenger that makes any believer too ashamed to put himself ahead of him. At the same time it earns a very generous reward indeed: **(9:120-9:121)**

### A TASK AKIN TO FIGHTING

The Muslim area had expanded. With the whole of Arabia practically adopting the Quranic message, large numbers were ready to fight. At Tabuk, there were about 30,000 of them, which was a much larger number than at any earlier battle the Muslims had fought. It was time that different people should attend to different tasks, so that no area, such as agriculture or trade or social concerns, was neglected. All these are necessary for an emerging nation, whose needs are far more sophisticated than those of a tribal community. Therefore the present sign was revealed to set out certain limits: *And it had not been for the ones who believe to move forward collectively. If every band moved not forward of them but a section of people only,*

*that they become learned in the way of life and that they warn their folk when they returned to them so that perhaps they will beware?* **(9:122)**

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

**How to Build Your Argument** from a few main ideas. State where you are going and what you will prove.

Know your audience: where are they coming from?
Cover mutual ground as a starting point.
Use familiar vocabulary to begin; introduce and define new concepts gradually.
Adapt the presentation's goals with the interests of your audience.
Treat each audience as a unique group.
Convince them with facts and logic.
Demonstrate that you know what you are talking about, but on their level!
Review and summarize in your conclusion.
Summarize what you've told them.
Check for comprehension.
Leave time for questions and discussion.
Follow up with options so audience can contact you.

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I thought about the depth of interrelationships as expressed in this sign between God, the Messenger and the believers.

## Lesson 113(16). Critical Thinking Intellectual Standard

### Appropriateness

Appropriate means bearing upon or relating to the matter at hand, that is understanding the Quranic message. It implies a close logical relationship with, and importance to, what the Quran is revealing. Its relevance and validity of information helps in structuring problems and solving them. The appropriateness of the Quran's message has been clear for over 1400 years as it is the model which the believers follow.

It is not the effort that you put into this Quranic Studies that is evaluated, but the quality of your learning. Quranic appropriateness connects to its teaching you how to think. Once you have assessed the issues, concepts and information relevant to the particular sign or signs, your thinking will be focused on the task, question or problem related from the sign or signs.

The Quranic message conforms to the principles of good reasoning. It is sensible and teaches good judgment through its consistent, logical, complete, relevant and appropriate arguments on issues that are important to human life. Being sensitive with an ability to judge appropriateness is only developed with continuous practice, practice in distinguishing the relevant from the irrelevant, by evaluating what is appropriate and by arguing for and against the appropriateness of facts.

## Chapter 9: Repentance (al-Tawbah)
## Signs 9:123-9:129

**Madinah:** *O those who have believed!*
*Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful.*
*And let them find harshness in you.*
*And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.*
(9:123)
*And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran,*
*some of them say: Which of you had this increased in belief?*
*As for those who believed, it increased them in belief*
*and they rejoice at the good tidings.* (9:124)
*But as for those who, in their hearts, is a sickness,*
*it increased disgrace to their disgrace*
*and they died while they are the ones who are ungrateful.* (9:125
*Consider they not that they are tried one time or two times a year?*
*Again, they neither repent nor they recollect.* (9:126)
*And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran,*
*some looked at some others saying: Is anyone seeing you?*
*Again, they took flight.*
*God turned away from their hearts*

*because they are a folk who understand not.* (9:127)
**Makkah (9:128)**
**Makkah (9:129)**

## COMMENTARY°

• The next sign defines the line the jihad movement should follow after the entire Arabian Peninsula has become the base of the Quranic message. Now jihad should mean fighting the ungrateful all together, so that all oppression is ended and people submit only to God. The same applies to jihad against the people of earlier revelations until they pay the submission tax: *O those who have believed! Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful. And let them find harshness in you. And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:123)**

• Now that a full clarification of the pledge and the responsibilities it lays down, and the line the Muslim community should follow is given, the Chapter provides two contrasting pictures showing the opposite attitudes of the believers and ungrateful towards the Quran as it is being revealed: **(9:124-9:126)**

### UNCOMPROMISING FIGHT

We then have a sign outlining the plan and extent of jihad, which was implemented by the Messenger Muhammad and his successors generally. The only exceptions were limited cases dictated by special circumstances: **(9:123)**

Let us now reflect on this sign: *O those who have believed! Fight the ones who are close to you of the ones who are ungrateful. And let them find harshness in you.* **(9:123)** What we find here is an order to fight those ungrateful who are near to the Muslim state, without specifying whether these have launched any aggression on the Muslims or their land. We understand that this is the final situation which makes the need to carry the Quranic message forward the basis of the principle of jihad. This will ensure that the Quranic message is available to humanity. It does not have a defensive outlook, as was the case with the provisional orders in the early days after the establishment of the Muslim state in Madinah.

Finally, this sign, giving such a clear order, was revealed in circumstances that suggest that the first to be meant by it were the Byzantines, who belonged to an earlier religion, or, to use the Quranic term, People of the Book. The Chapter, however, has already made it clear that they had distorted their faith and obeyed man-made laws and systems, so they were truly ungrateful. We should reflect here on the line of action the Quranic message takes towards communities of the People of the Book who have turned away from their

faith and adopted manmade laws. This line of action applies to all such communities everywhere. God has commanded the believers to fight those ungrateful who are near to them, and to be tough on them, but then concluded the sign making this order by saying: *And know that God is with the ones who are God-conscious.* **(9:123)**

### THE QURANIC WAR ETHICS

When the Messenger appointed someone to command an army or a patrol, he would recommend him to be God-conscious in his public and private affairs, and to take good care of those who were under his command. Then he would tell them: March by God's name and to serve His cause. Fight those who deny God. March on; but do not be unfair, and do not commit any treachery. Do not disfigure the bodies of any enemy soldiers killed in battle. Never kill any children. When you meet your enemies, call upon them to choose one of three alternatives. If they choose one of them, accept it from them and do not fight them. Call on them first to accept the Quranic message. If they agree, accept their pledges and do not fight them. Then ask them to move over to the land of the Emigrants, and tell them that they would then have the same duties and privileges of the Emigrants. If they do not wish to move from their quarters, tell them that they would then be in the same position as the bedouin Muslims. They will be subject to God's orders that are applicable to all believers, but they will have no share of any booty that is gained through wa: or peaceful campaigns, unless they fight with the Muslims. If they refuse to accept the Quranic message, then offer them the alternative of paying *jizyah* [or tribute]. If they agree, accept it from them and do not fight them. If they refuse, then seek God's help and fight them.

### HYPOCRITICAL ATTITUDES

Since the Chapter has spoken extensively about the hypocrites, we have here some signs showing how those hypocrites used to receive any new revelation outlining certain duties imposed by the faith they falsely claimed to accept. This is contrasted with the way believers used to receive the revelation of new signs of the Quran: **(9:124-9:127)**

It is a strange and suspicious question the first sign quotes: **(9:124-9:125)**

Before the Chapter portrays the opposite picture, it wonders at those hypocrites who never take an admonition, and never reflect on an event to gather the lesson that may be learnt from it: *Consider they not that they are tried one time or two times a year? Again, they neither repent nor they recollect.* **(9:126)** The test may have taken

the form of exposing their reality, or that the believers achieve victory without those hypocrites taking any part. There could be many other forms of test, which were all too frequent at the time of the Messenger. Still hypocrites today are tested and they pay no heed.

The next sign portrays a vivid scene, full of details, showing their behavior: **(9:127)**

When we read this sign, the scene of these hypocrites is large in front of us. We see them at the moment when a new Chapter is revealed, with some of them looking at each other winking and wondering: *And whenever there was caused to descend a chapter of the Quran, some looked at some others saying: Is anyone seeing you?* **(9:127)** Then they feel that the believers are preoccupied with their own business, so they go out stealthily, hoping not to be noticed: *Again, they took flight.* **(9:127)** But the eye which never loses sight of anything follows them with a curse that suits their suspicious deed: *God turned away from their hearts.* **(9:127)** Their hearts are turned away from the right guidance. They deserve to remain deep in error, *because they are a folk who understand not.* **(9:127)** This is because they have kept their hearts and minds idle, unable to function properly. All of this scene is portrayed so skilfully and vividly using only a few words.

## STUDENT ASSIGNMENT

### EXAMPLE OF HOW CRITICAL THINKING WORKS

Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **consequences** (implications). We use **concepts** (vocabulary, ideas and theories) to **interpret information** (facts, data, evidence and experiences) in order to answer **questions**, (solve problems, and resolve issues).

### DEVELOPING QURANIC CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

What factors make the interrelationship among believers a difficult problem in terms of being part of a community?
What are some of the complexities of this question?
Is this question simple or complex?
Is it easy or difficult to answer well and truly?
What makes this a complex question?
How are we dealing with the complexities inherent in the question?

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned.

I was able to explain the main points of the signs to another student.

# EPILOGUE

## THE FAREWELL PILGRIMAGE DHU AL-HIJJA 10 AH (MARCH 630 CE

The period for the annual pilgrimage again approached. Nothing new appeared to hinder the Messenger from the fulfillment of its ceremonies. There was no longer the possibility of offense from idolatrous objects or rites of the idolaters. Every vestage of an image in Makkah and its outskirts had been cleared away. And after the threatening announcement of the previous year, none but professed believers might enter now. The Messenger had not performed the greater pilgrimage since his flight from Makkah. He now announced his intention fo going up to the coming festival.

### JOURNEY FROM MADINAH TO MAKKAH

Five days before the beginning of Dhu al-Hijja, the month of pilgrimage, the Prophet assumed the pilgrim's garb. Before arriving in Makkah, Muhammad stayed at miqat and taught people the manners of wearing the sacred garb (ihram). He performed the full ablution (ghusl or ritual bath) and then put on ihram for Hajj. His ihram clothing was two pieces of Yemeni unsewed white cotton that later on became his shroud. He moved on so that he did his noon formal prayers in the mosque of Shajara. Followed by vast multitudes, he set out on the journey to Makkah. All his wives accompanied him. One hundred camels, marked by his own hand as victims, were led in solemn procession. Along the road, mosques had already sprung up at the various halting places. At each, the people prayed, the Messenger leading the devotions. On the evening of the tenth day, he reached Sarif, an easy stage from Makkah. there he rested for the night and on the following morning, having bathed, and mounted al-Qaswa, he proceeded towards Makkah. He entered the upper suburbs by the same route which he had taken two years before; and, passing down the main street of the city, approached the Kabah. As he passed. through the Bani Sheyba gate, the ancient gate leading into the courtyard of the Kabah situated NE by E of the Kabah and beyond the Station of Abraham, with the Kabah full in view, he raised his hands to heaven, and said: O Lord! Add unto this House in the dignity and glory, the honor and the reverence, which already **You** have bestowed on it. And those who come for the greater Pilgrimage and the lesser visitation frequent the same, increase them much in honor and dignity, in piety, goodness, and glory! Then, mounted as he was on his camel, he performed the prescribed circuits, and other rites, and afterwards retired to a tent pitched for him in the valley.

### MOST OF HIS FOLLOWERS PERFORM THE LESSER PILGRIMAGE ONLY

The greater part of the pilgrims had brought no sacrificial animals with them. after completing the customary forms of the *umra* or lesser pilgrimage, they were directed by the Messenger to divest themselves of the pilgrim garb. They accompanied the Prophet and the others who had brought sacrificial

animals, in their farther procession to Mina and Arafat, but only as spectators. Ali, who in the meantime had returned from Yemen, received the same directions as the rest of those who had no sacrificial animals: Go, said the Messenger, and encircle the Kabah; then divest yourself of the pilgrim's garb as your fellows have done. But Ali was anxious to fulfill the full rites of the yearly festival and he said: I have taken upon me vows to perform the same pilgrimage as the Prophet, whatever that might be. The Messenger yielded, and allowed him to fulfill the greater Pilgrimage, and to be a sharer in the sacrificial animals he had brought for himself.

**THE MESSENGER PERFORMS THE PILGRIMAGE TO ARAFAT, DHU HIJJA 8.**

On the 7th of Dhu al-Hijja, the day preceding opening rites of the greater Pilgrimage, the Messenger, after the mid-day prayer, preached to his followers assembled at the Kabah. Next day, (the 8th called *tarwiyah*) followed by the whole multitude of pilgrims, and shaded from the sun's glare by Bilal who walked at his side with a screen, he proceeded to Mina, where he performed the formal prayers, and passed the night in a tent. The following morning at sunrise, he moved onwards, and passing Muzdalifa, reached Arafat, an abrupt mound, about two hundred feet high, in the middle of the valley, which, though elsewhere narrow, and on the farther side pent in by lofty granite peaks, here spreads out bare and stony to the breadth of nearly a mile.

On the summit of the sacred mount, the Prophet, standing erect upon his camel, said: The entire valley of Arafat is the station for Pilgrimage, excepting only the vale of Urana. Observe and learn of me the ceremonies which you should practice for I know not whether after this I shall ever perform another pilgrimage. After he had bowed himself in prayer, he recited certain passages of the Quran, regarding the ceremonies of Pilgrimage, and concluded with the verse: *This day have I perfected your way of life unto you, and fulfilled my mercy upon you, and appointed Islam for you to be your way of life.*

As the sun was going down, the Messenger left Arafat. Retracing his steps with Usama, son of Zayd, seated behind him on the camel, he traveled hastily back by the bright moonlight along the narrow valley to Muzdalifa, where he offered the sunset and evening formal prayers both together. In this, and every other point, his example has been closely imitated by the pilgrims yearly, to the present day. He passed the night at Muzdalifa, and very early in the morning sent forward the women and the children, lest the crowds of pilgrims that followed should impede their journey. Touching them on the shoulder as they went, he said: My children, have a care that you throw not the stones until the sun arise.

When the morning of the tenth day of the month came, the Messenger arose to perform the early prayer; after which, he mounted his camel, and took his stand on a certain spot, saying: This place and the whole of Muzdalifa is the station of pilgrimage, excepting only the vale of Muhassir.t

Then, with Fadhl, son of Abbas, seated behind him, he proceeded onwards amid a heavy fall of rain to Mina, shouting as he went the pilgrim's cry: Labbayk! O Lord! Labbayk! Labbayk! There is no other god but **You**. Labbayk! Praise, blessing, and dominion be to **You**. Labbayk! No one may share with **You** therein. Labbayk, Labbayk. (Here I am O Lord!)

He ceased not to utter these prayers until he had reached Mina, and cast stones at the Aqaba, a projecting corner of the valley. Afterwards, he sacrificed the animals brought for sacrifice, and then ended the pilgrimage by shaving the hair of his head and partly also of his face, and paring his nails; the hair and parings be ordered to be burned. The scanty dress of pilgrimage was now put away, perfumes were burned, the flesh of the victims and other cattle was distributed for food, and proclamation made that the restrictions of the pilgrim state being ended, it was now a day for eating and enjoyment, and for the remembrance of God. the Messenger remained at Mina from the 10th to the 12th of Dul Hijja. Every evening as the sun declined he repaired to Aqaba and repeated the rite of casting stones.

### PARTING EXHORTATION AT MINA 11TH DHI HIJJA

On the second of these three days, the Prophet mounted his camel, and taking up a central and prominent position in the Mina valley, addressed the vast crowd of pilgrims in a memorable speech, which was looked upon by the people, and probably was felt by the Messenger himself, as his parting exhortation. Fragments of the discourse have been preserved. Of these the following passages are the most important: O people! Hearken to my words for I know not whether, after this year, I shall ever be amongst you here again. Your lives and property are sacred and inviolable amongst one another until the end of time. The Lord has ordained to every person the share of his inheritance: a Testament is not lawful to the prejudice of heirs. The child belongs to the parent: and the violator of wedlock shall be stoned. Whoever claims falsely another for his father, or another for his mother, the curse of God and the Angels, and of all humanity shall rest upon him.[1]

And your POW/slaves! See that you feed them with such food as you eat yourselves; and clothe them with the stuff you wear. And if they commit a fault which you are not inclined to forgive, then sell them, for they are the servants of the Lord, and are not to be tormented .O people! hearken to my speech and comprehend the same. Know that every Muslim is the brother of every other Muslim. All of you are on the same equality (and as he pronounced these words, he raised his arms aloft and placed the forefinger of one hand on the forefinger of the other). You are one brotherhood.

Know you what month this is? What territory is this? What day? To each question, the people gave the appropriate answer, viz., The Sacred Month, the Sacred Territory, the great day of Pilgrimage. After every one of these replies, the Messenger added: Even thus sacred and inviolable has God made the life

and the property of each of you unto the other until you meet your Lord. Let him that is present, tell it to him that is absent. Haply he that shall be told may remember better than he who has hard it.

### ABOLITION OF THE INTERCALARY YEAR

The Messenger then proceeded to recite the 37th and 38th verses of Chapter 9 which abolish the triennial intercalation of the year and fix the month of Pilgrimage according to the changing seasons of the lunar year. Truly, the number of the months with God is twelve months on the day in which he created the heavens and the earth. Of these, four are sacred. This is the true religion. Truly the changing of the months is an excess in ingratitude which causes the ungrateful to err. They make a month common in one year and they make it sacred in another year that they may equalize the number which God has made sacred. Thus do they make common that which God has hallowed. And now, continued the Messenger, on this very day has time performed its cycle and returned to the disposition thereof existing at the moment when God created the heavens and the earth.

O people! Truly Satan despairs of being worshipped in your land forever. But if in some indifferent matter which you might be disposed to slight, he could secure obedience verily he would be well pleased. Wherefore be aware of him![2]

Truly I have fulfilled my mission. I have left that amongst you a plain command—the Book of God and manifest ordinances which if you hold fast, you shall never go astray[3].

Then, looking up to heaven, the Messenger said : O Lord! I have delivered my message and fulfilled my mission. Yea, cried all the people who crowded round him, yea, verily you have. O Lord ! I beseech **You** bear **You** witness unto it. With these words, the Prophet concluded his address and dismissed the great assembly.

### THE MESSENGER RETURNS TO MAKKAH

After staying three days at Mina, the pilgrims broke up and proceeded to Mecca. The Messenger desired the mass of the pilgrims to travel thither by day. He himself accompanied his wives on the journey by night. On reaching Makkah, he went straightway to the Kabah, and performed the seven circuits of it on his camel. He next proceeded to the well Zamzam close by, and calling for a pitcher of its water, drank part of its contents. Then he rinsed his mouth in the pitcher, and desired that the water remaining in it should be thrown back into the well.

After this, taking off his shoes, he ascended the doorway of the Kabah, and prayed within its walls. Having now ended all the ceremonies, and being fatigued with the journey, he stopped at the house of one who kept Nabidz, or date-water, for the Pilgrims to drink, and desired the beverage to be furnished

to him. The son of Abbas, who accompanied him, interposed: The hands of the passers-by, he said, have been in this all day, and fouled it: come unto my father's house, where we have some that is clean and pure for thee. But the Prophet, refusing to drink of any other, quenched his thirst upon the spot. Three days more were spent at Makkah, and then the Messenger with his followers set out for Madinah.

On the way back to Madinah, the Messenger stopped at Ghadir Khumm on the 18th of Dhu al-Hijja to convey the message to the pilgrims before they dispersed. He gave a long sermon on a rostrum of camel saddles. At one point, he asked his followers whether he, Muhammad, had more authority (*awla*) over the believers than they had over themselves; the crowd's answer was positive aloud. Then he took Ali by the hand and declared: Whomever's master (*mawla*) I am, this Ali is also his master. Then the Prophet also announced his imminent death and charged the believers to remain attached to the Quran and his family. Afterward, the caravan moved towards Madinah and apparently arriving there on one of the last days of Dhu al-Hijja.

# Appendix 1: Madinah Signs Placed in Makkan Chapters

## Quranic Sign 53:32

**Madinah:** *Those who avoid the major sins*
*and the indecencies but the lesser offenses.*
*Truly, your Lord is One Who is Extensive in forgiveness.*
*He is greater in knowledge of you*
*when He caused you to grow from the earth*
*and when you were an unborn child*
*in the wombs of your mothers.*
*So you make not pure yourselves.*
*He is greater in knowledge of him who was God-conscious.* (53:32)

## Quranic Sign 77:4

**Madinah:** *When it will be said:*
*Bow down, they bow not down.* (77:48)

## Quranic Sign 50:38

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, We created the heavens and the earth*
*and whatever is between in six days,*
*and no exhaustion afflicted Us.* (50:38)

## Quranic Signs 7:163-7:171

**Madinah:** *And ask them about the town*
*—that which had been bordering the sea—*
*when they disregarded the Sabbath,*
*when their great fish would approach them*
*on the day of the Sabbath,*
*one that was visible on the shore.*
*And the day they keep not the Sabbath,*
*they approach them not.*
*Thus, We try them because they had been disobeying.* (7:163)
*And mention when a community of them said:*
*Why admonish a folk whom God*
*is One Who Causes them to Perish*
*or One Who Punishes them with a severe punishment.*
*They said: To be free from guilt before your Lord*
*and so that perhaps they will be God-conscious.* (7:164)
*So when they forgot of what*
*they were reminded, We rescued those who prohibited evil*
*and We took those who did wrong*
*with a terrifying punishment*
*because they had been disobeying.* (7:165)

*Then, when they defied what they were prohibited*
*We said to them: Be you apes, ones who are driven away.* (7:166)
*And mention when **your** Lord*
*caused to be proclaimed that He would, surely,*
*raise up against them until the Day of Resurrection*
*who cause an affliction to befall on them*
*of a dire punishment.*
*Truly, **your** Lord is Swift in repayment.*
*And, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (7:167)
*And We sundered them in the region into communities.*
*Some of them were the ones in accord with morality*
*and others were other than that.*
*And We tried them with benevolence*
*and evil deeds so that perhaps*
*they will return to obedience.* (7:168)
*Then, after that succeeded successors*
*who inherited the Book.*
*They take advantage of this nearer world,*
*and they say: We will be forgiven.*
*And if an advantage approaches them like it*
*they will take it. Is not a solemn promis*
*taken from them with the Boo*
*that they would say about God only The Truth?*
*And studied they not what is in it,*
*and know that the Last Abode*
*is better for those who are God-conscious?*
*Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (7:169)
*And those who keep fast to the Book*
*and performed the formal prayer,*
*We will not waste the compensation*
*of the ones who make things right.* (7:170)
*Mention when We shook up the mountain over them,*
*as if it had been an over shadowing,*
*and they thought it was that which would fall on them:*
*It was said: Take firmly what We have given you*
*and remember what is in it*
*so that perhaps you would be God fearing.* (7:171)

## Quranic Sign 36:45

**Madinah:** *And when it was said to them:*
*Be Godfearing of what is in advance of you*
*and what is behind you,*
*so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (36:45)

## Quranic Signs: 25:68-25:70

**Madinah:** *Those who call not to another god with God*
*nor kill the soul which God forbade but rightfully,*
*nor commit adultery.*
*And whoever disregards*
*and commits this will meet sinfulness.* (25:68)
*The punishment will be multiplied for him*
*on the Day of Resurrection.*
*And he will dwell in it forever,*
*as one who is despised.* (25:69)
*Whoever has repented and believed*
*and whose actions were done as one in accord with morality,*
*for those God will substitute*
*for their evil deeds benevolence.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (25:70)

## Quranic Sign 19:58

**Madinah:** *Those are those to whom God was gracious*
*from among the Prophets of the offspring of Adam*
*and whomever We carried with Noah*
*and of the offspring of Abraham and Jacob,*
*from among whomever We guided and elected.*
*When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful*
*they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves.* (19:58)
*Then, after them succeeded a succession*
*who wasted the formal prayer*
*and followed their lusts.*
*So they will meet error,* (19:59)
*but the ones who repented and believed*
*and did as ones in accord with morality.*
*For those will enter the Garden*
*and they will not be wronged at all,* (19:60)
*Gardens of Eden which The Merciful*
*promised His servants in the unseen.*
*Truly, He, His promise had been that which is kept.* (19:61)
*They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but:*
*Peace. And they will have their provision in them.* (19:62)
*This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance*
*to whomever of Our servants who had been devout.* (19:63)
*And we come forth not but by the command of* ***your*** *Lord.*
*To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us*
*and whatever is behind us and whatever is in between that.*
*And* ***your*** *Lord had not been forgetful,* (19:64)

*the Lord of the heavens and the earth,*
*and what is between them!*
*So worship Him and maintain* ***you*** *patience in His worship.*
*Have* ***you*** *known any namesake for Him?* (19:65)
*And the human being says: When I am dead,*
*will I be brought out living?* (19:66)
*Will the human being not remember that We created him*
*before when he be of nothing?* (19:67)
*So by* ***your*** *Lord, certainly, We will assemble them and the satans.*
*Again, We will parade them around hell,*
*ones who crawl on their knees.* (19:68)
*Again, We will tear out every partisan,*
*whoever of them was more severe in stubborn rebellion*
*against The Merciful.*(19:69)
*After that We are greater in knowledge of those,*
*they who are most deserving of roasting in it.* (19:70)
*There is none of you, but ones who go down to it.*
*This had been a thing decreed,*
*that decreed by* ***your*** *Lord. (19:71)*

## Quranic Signs 20:130-20:131

**Madinah:** *So have* ***you*** *patience with what they say*
*and glorify the praises of* ***your*** *Lord before the coming up of the sun*
*and before sunset and during the nighttime night watch*
*and glorify at the end of the daytime,*
*so that perhaps* ***you*** *will be well-pleased.* (20:130)
*And stretch not out* ***your*** *eyes*
*for what We gave of enjoyment in this life to spouses*
*among them as the luster of this present life*
*so that We try them by it.*
*And provision of* ***your*** *Lord is Best and that which endures.* (20:131)

## Quranic Signs 56:81-56:82

**Madinah:** *Then, is it this discourse*
*that you are ones who scorn?* (56:81)
*And you make it your provision that you,*
*you deny the Recitation.* (56:82)

## Quranic Sign 26:197

**Madinah:** *Would it not be a sign for them*
*that is known to the knowing*
*among the Children of Jacob?* (26:197)

## QURANIC SIGNS 26:224-26:227

**Madinah:** *As for the poets,*
*the ones who are in error follow them.* (26:224)
*Have **you** not considered that*
*they wander in every valley* (26:225)
*and that they say what they accomplish not?* (26:226)
*But those who believed and did*
*as the ones in accord with morality*
*remembered God frequently*
*and helped themselves after they were wronged.*
*And those who did wrong will know*
*by which overturning they will be turned about!* (26:227)

## QURANIC SIGNS 28:52-28:55

**Madinah:** *Those to whom We gave the Book before it,*
*they believe in it.* (28:52)
*And when it is recounted to them,*
*they say: We believed in it.*
*Truly, it is The Truth from our Lord.*
*Truly, even before it we had been*
*ones who submit to God.* (28:53)
*Those will be given their compensation*
*two times because they patiently endured*
*and drive off evil deeds with benevolence*
*and they spend out of what We provided them.* (28:54)
*And when they heard idle talk,*
*they turned aside from it and said:*
*To us are our actions and to you are your actions.*
*Peace be to you! We are not looking for*
*the ones who are ignorant.* (28:55)

## QURANIC SIGN 17:26

**Madinah:** *And give to the possessor of kinship his right*
*and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.*
*And spend not extravagantly an extravagant spending.* (17:26)

## QURANIC SIGNS 17:32-17:33

**Madinah:** *And come not near committing adultery.*
*Truly, it had been a great indecency!*
*How evil a way!* (17:32)
*And kill not a soul that God forbade, but rightfully.*
*And whoever was slain as one who is treated unjustly,*

*surely, We assigned for his protector, authority,*
*but he should not exceed all bounds in killing.*
*Truly, he would be one who is helped by the Law.* (17:33)

## QURANIC SIGN 17:57

**Madinah:** *Those are those to whom they call to,*
*they are looking for an approach to their Lord*
*—whoever is nearer—and they hope for His mercy*
*and they fear His punishment.*
*Truly, the punishment of your Lord*
*had been one to beware.* (17:57)

## QURANIC SIGNS 17:73-17:80

**Madinah:** *And, truly, they were about to persecute you*
*for what We revealed to you*
*so that you would devise against Us other than it.*
*And, then, they would take you*
*to themselves as a friend.* (17:73)
*And if We made you not firm, certainly,*
*you were about to incline to them a little.* (17:74)
*And, then, We would have caused you*
*to experience a double of this life*
*and a double after dying.*
*Again, you would find for yourself no helper*
*against Us.* (17:75)
*They were about to hound you from the region*
*that they drive you out of it.*
*Then, they would not linger in expectation*
*behind you but for a little while.* (17:76)
*This is, surely, the way*
*with whomever We sent before you*
*of Our Messengers.*
*And you will not find in Our way any revision.* (17:77)
*Perform the formal prayer*
*from the sinking sun until the darkening of the night*
*and the recital at dawn.*
*Truly, the dawn recital had been one that is witnessed.* (17:78)
*And keep vigil with it in the night*
*as a work of supererogation for you.*
*Perhaps your Lord will raise you up*
*to a station of one who is praised.* (17:79)
*And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter a gate in sincerity.*

*And bring me out as one who is brought out in sincerity.*
*And assign me from that which proceeds from* ***Your*** *Presence*
*a helping authority.* (17:80)

## Quranic Sign 10:40

**Madinah:** *And of them are some who believe in it*
*and of them are some who believe not in it.*
*And* ***your*** *Lord is greater in knowledge*
*of the ones who make corruption.* (10:40)

## Quranic Signs 10:94-10:97

**Madinah:** *So if* ***you*** *had been in uncertainty*
*about what We caused to descend to* ***you****,*
*then, ask those who recited the Book before* ***you****.*
*Certainly, The Truth drew near* ***you*** *from* ***your*** *Lord*
*so* ***you*** *have not been among the ones who contest.* (10:94)
***You*** *have not been among those who denied the signs of God,*
*for, then,* ***you*** *would be among the ones who are losers.* (10:95)
*Truly, those against whom is realized*
*through the Word of* ***your*** *Lord, will not believe.* (10:96)
*—even if every sign drew near them—*
*until they consider the painful punishment.* (10:97)

## Quranic Sign 11:12

**Madinah:** *So would* ***you*** *perhaps be one who leaves*
*some of what is revealed to* ***you****?*
*Or is* ***your*** *breast that which is narrowed by it because they say:*
*Why was a treasure not caused to descend to him*
*or an angel drew near him?*
*Truly,* ***your*** *are only a warner.*
*And God is a Trustee over everything.*
*Or they say: He devised it.* (11:12)

## Quranic Sign 11:17

**Madinah:** *Is he, then, who had been*
*on a clear portent from his Lord,*
*and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness*
*—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader*
*and a mercy—like them?*
*Those believe in it.*
*Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates,*
*he is promised the fire!*

*So be **you** not hesitant about it.*
*Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
*except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17)

## QURANIC SIGN 11:114

**Madinah:** *And perform the formal prayer*
*at the two ends of the daytime*
*and at nearness of the nighttime.*
*Truly, benevolence causes evil deeds to be put away.*
*That is a reminder for the ones who remember.* (11:114)

## QURANIC SIGNS 12:1-12:3; 12:7

**Madinah:** *Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the clear Book.* (12:1)
*Truly, We caused to descend a Recitation in Arabic*
*so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (12:2)
*We relate to **you** the fairer of narratives*
*through what We revealed to **you** of this,*
*the Quran, although **you** had been*
*before this among the ones who are heedless.* (12:3)
*****
*Certainly, there had been in Joseph*
*and his brothers signs for the ones who ask.* (12:7)

## QURANIC SIGN 15:87

**Madinah:** *And, certainly, We gave **you** seven often repeated parts*
*of the sublime Quran.* (15:87)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:20

**Madinah:** *Those to whom We gave the Book*
*recognize it as they recognize their own children.*
*But those, they who lost themselves, they believe not.* (6:20)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:23

**Madinah:** *Again, their dissent will not be*
*but that they would say:By God! Our Lord!*
*We had not been ones who are polytheists.* (6:23)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:91

**Madinah:** *And they measured not God with His true measure*
*when they said:*
*God caused not to descend anything to a mortal.*

*Say: Who caused the Book to descend*
*that was brought about for Moses*
*as a light and guidance for humanity?*
*You make it into parchments.*
*You show them some of it and conceal much of it.*
*And you were taught what you know not,*
*you nor your fathers.*
*Say: God revealed it.*
*Again, forsake them playing, engaging in their idle talk.* (6:91)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:93

**Madinah:** *And who does greater wrong*
*than he who devised lies against God or said:*
*It was revealed to me, when nothing is revealed to him.*
*Or who said: I will cause to descend*
*the like of what God caused to descend.*
*And if **you** would see when the ones who are unjust*
*are in the perplexity of death and the angels*
*—the ones who stretch out their hands will say:*
*Relinquish your souls.*
*Today, you will be given recompense*
*with the humiliating punishment*
*for what you had been saying about God*
*other than The Truth.*
*And you had been growing arrogant to His signs.* (6:93)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:114

**Madinah:** *Will I be looking for an arbiter other than God*
*while it is He Who caused to descend to you the Book,*
*one that is distinct?*
*And those to whom We gave the Book,*
*they know that it is one that is sent down*
*by **your** Lord with The Truth.*
*So **you** have not been among the ones who contest.* (6:114)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:141

**Madinah:** *And it is He Who caused gardens to grow,*
*trellised and without being trellised and the date palm trees*
*and a variety of harvest crops and the olives*
*and the pomegranates resembling and not resembling one another.*
*Eat of its fruit when it bore fruit*
*and give its due on the day of its reaping*
*and exceed not all bounds.*

*Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.* (6:141)

## QURANIC SIGNS 6:151-6:153

**Madinah:** *Say: Approach now.*
*I will recount what your Lord forbade you:*
*Ascribe nothing as partners with Him.*
*And show kindness to the ones who are your parents.*
*And kill not your children from want.*
*We will provide for you and for them.*
*And come not near any indecencies*
*whether these were manifest or what was inward.*
*And kill not a soul which God forbade, unless rightfully.*
*He charged you with that*
*so that perhaps you will be reasonable.* (6:151)
*And come not near the property of the orphan*
*but with what is fairer*
*until one reaches the coming of age.*
*And live up to the full measure and balance with equity.*
*We will not place a burden on any soul, but to its capacity.*
*And when you said something,*
*be just, even if it had been with possessors of kinship*
*and live up to the compact of God.*
*Thus, He charged you with it*
*so that perhaps you will recollect.* (6:152
*And this is My straight path*
*so follow it and follow not the ways*
*that will split you up from His way.*
*That He has charged you of it*
*so that perhaps you would be God-conscious.* (6:153)

## QURANIC SIGNS 31:27-31:29

**Madinah:** *And if trees on the earth were only pens*
*and the sea causes to increase after that*
*with seven more seas that were ink,*
*yet the Words of God would not come to an end.*
*Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.* (31:27)
*Your creation and your Upraising*
*are not but like that of a single soul.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.* (31:28)
*Have you not considered*
*that God causes the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime*
*and causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime*
*and caused the sun to become subservient and the moon,*

*each run for a term, that which is determined*
*and that God is Aware of what you do?* (31:29)

### QURANIC SIGN 34:6

**Madinah:** *And consider those who were given the knowledge*
*that what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord.*
*It is The Truth and it guides to a path of*
*The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

### QURANIC SIGNS 39:52-39:54

**Madinah:** *Know they not that God extends the provision*
*for whomever He wills and tightens it for whom He wills?*
*Truly, in this are, certainly, signs for a folk who believe.* (39:52)
*Say: O My servants who exceeded all bounds against themselves,*
*despair not of the mercy of God. Truly, God forgives all impieties.*
*Truly, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.* (39:53)
*Be penitent to your Lord and submit to Him*
*before the punishment approaches you.*
*Again, you will not be helped.* (39:54)

### QURANIC SIGNS 40:56-40:57

**Madinah:** T*ruly, those who dispute about the signs of God*
*without any authority having approached them,*
*there is nothing but having pride in their breasts.*
*They will never be ones who reach its satisfaction.*
*So seek refuge in God.*
*Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.* (40:56)
*Certainly, the creation of the heavens and the earth*
*is greater than the creation of humanity,*
*yet most of humanity knows not.* (40:57)

### QURANIC SIGNS 42:23-42:25; 42:27

**Madinah:** *That is what God gives as good tidings to His servants*
*who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality.*
*Say: I ask you not for compensation, but for the affection for any kin.*
*And whoever gains benevolence,*
*We will increase for him goodness in it.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Most Ready to Appreciate.* (42:23)
*Or they say: He devised against God a lie.*
*But if God wills He would have sealed over **your** heart.*
*And God blots out falsehood and verifies The Truth by His Words.*
*Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.* (42:24)
*And He is the One Who accepts the remorse of His servants*

*and pardons their evil deeds.*
*And He knows what you accomplish.* (42:25)

*****

*And if God extended the provision for His servants,*
*they would be insolent in the earth,*
*but He sends down by measure whatever He wills.*
*Truly, He is The Aware, The Seeing of His servants.* (42:27)

## Quranic Sign 45:14

**Madinah:** *Say to those who believed:*
*Forgive those who hope not for the Days of God*
*that He give recompense to a folk*
*according to what they had been earning.* (45:14)

## Quranic Sign 46:10

**Madinah:** *Say: Considered you if this had been from God*
*and you were ungrateful for it*
*and bore witness as one who bears witness*
*from among the Children of Jacob to its like*
*and believed in it, yet you grew arrogant,*
*how unjust you are;*
*truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* (46:10)

## Quranic Sign 46:15

**Madinah:** *And We charged the human being with kindness*
*to ones who are his parents.*
*His mother carried him painfully*
*and she painfully brought him forth.*
*And the bearing of him and the weaning of him*
*are thirty months.*
*When he was fully grown, having come of age*
*and reached forty years he said:*
*My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks*
*for **Your** divine blessing,*
*that with which **You** were gracious to me*
*and to ones who are my parents*
*and that I do as one in accord with morality*
*so that **You** be well-pleased*
*and make things right for me and my offspring.*
*Truly, I repented to **You** and, truly,*
*I am of the ones who submit to God.* (46:15)

## QURANIC SIGN 46:35

**Madinah:** *So have **you** patience as endured patiently*
*those imbued with constancy of the Messengers*
*and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.*
*As, truly, on a Day they will see what they are promised*
*as if they lingered not in expectation*
*but for an hour of daytime.*
*This is delivering the message!*
*Will any be caused to perish but the folk,*
*the ones who disobey?* (46:35)

## QURANIC SIGN 18:28

**Madinah:** *And have **you** patience **yourself***
*with those who call to their Lord*
*in the morning and the evening,*
*wanting His Countenance.*
*And let not **your** eyes pass over them*
*wanting the adornment of this present life.*
*And obey not him whose heart*
*We made neglectful of Our Remembrance*
*and who followed his own desires*
*and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

## QURANIC SIGNS 18:83-18:101

**Madinah:** *And they will ask **you** about Dhu-l Qarnayn.*
*Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him.* (18:83)
*Truly, We established him firmly on the earth*
*and gave him a route to everything.* (18:84)
*So he pursued a route* (18:85)
*until when he reached the setting of the sun.*
*He found it beginning to set in a spring of muddy water.*
*And he found near it a folk.*
*We said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn!*
*Either **you** will punish them*
*or **you** will take them to **yourself** with goodness.* (18:86)
*He said: As for him who did wrong,*
*we will punish him.*
*Again, he will be returned to his Lord*
*Who will punish him with a horrible punishment.* (18:87 )
*But as for him who believed*
*and did as one in accord with morality,*
*he will have the fairer recompense.*

*And we will say to him of our command with ease.* (18:88 )
*Again, he pursued a route* (18:89)
*until when he reached the rising place of the sun.*
*He found it coming up on a folk*
*for whom We make not any obstruction against it.* (18:90)
*Thus, We, surely, enclosed whatever was near him*
*through awareness.* (18:91)
*Again, he pursued a route* (18:92)
*until when he reached between two embankments.*
*He found behind them a folk who would almost not understand*
*any saying.* (18:93)
*They said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn!*
*Truly, Gog and Magog are ones who make*
*corruption in and on the earth.*
*Will we assign to* ***you*** *payment*
*if* ***you*** *have made an embankment*
*between us and between them?* (18:94 )
*He said: What my Lord established firmly for me is better,*
*so assist me with strength.*
*I will make a fortification between you and between them.* (18:95)
*Give me ingots of iron, until when he made level between the two cliffs.*
*He said: Blow, until when he made it a fire.*
*He said: Give me molten brass to pour out over it.* (18:96)
*So they were not able to scale it*
*nor were they able to dig through it.* (18:97)
*He said: This is a mercy from my Lord.*
*So when the promise of my Lord drew near, He will made it powder.*
*And the promise of my Lord had been true.* (18:98)
*And that Day We will leave some of them*
*to surge like waves on some others.*
*And the trumpet will be blown, then,*
*We will gather them altogether.* (18:99)
*We will present the depths of hell*
*on that Day in plain view to ones who are ungrateful,* (18:100)
*to those whose eyes had been screened*
*from My Remembrance and who had not been able to hear.* (18:101)

## Quranic Signs 16:126-16:128

**Madinah:** *And if you chastised, then,*
*chastise with the like*
*of that with which you were chastised.*
*But if you endured patiently, certainly,*
*it is better for the ones who remain steadfast.* (16:126)

*And have **you** patience and **your** patience is only from God.*
*And feel not remorse over them,*
*nor be **you** troubled about what they plan.* (16:127)
*Truly, God is with those*
*who were God-conscious and those,*
*they are ones who are doers of good.* (16:128)

## QURANIC SIGNS 14:28-14:29

**Madinah:** *Have **you** not considered those who substituted ingratitude*
*for the divine blessing of God*
*and caused their folk to live in abodes of nothingness?* (14:28)
*They will roast in hell. Miserable will be the stopping place!* (14:29)

## QURANIC SIGNS 32:15-32:20

**Madinah:** *Only those believe in Our signs who,*
*when they were reminded of them, fall down,*
*ones who prostrate themselves*
*and glorify the praise of their Lord*
*and they grow not arrogant.* (32:15)
*whose sides deliberately avoided their sleeping places*
*to call to their Lord in fear and hope.*
*And they spend of what We provided them.* (32:16)
*No soul knows what was concealed for them of comfort*
*for their eyes as a recompense*
*for what they had been doing.* (32:17)
*Is he who had been one who believes*
*like he who had been one who disobeys?*
*They are not on the same level.* (32:18)
*As for those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*for them are Gardens as places of shelter,*
*hospitality for them for what they had been doing.* (32:19)
*And as for those who disobeyed,*
*their place of shelter will be the fire.*
*Every time they would want to go forth from there,*
*they would be caused to return to it.*
*And it will be said to them:*
*Experience the punishment of the fire*
*which you had been denying!* (32:20)

## QURANIC SIGN 30:17

**Madinah:** *So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour*
*and at the time when it comes to be the morning!* (30:17)

## Quranic Signs 29:1-29:11

**Madinah:** *Alif Lam Mim.* (29:1)
*Assumed humanity that they will be left*
*because they say: We believed and they will not be tried?* (29:2)
*And, certainly, We tried those who were before them.*
*Then, certainly, God knows those who were sincere*
*and knows the ones who lie.* (29:3)
*Or assumed those who do evil deeds that they will out do Us?*
*How evil is that about which they give judgment!* (29:4)
*Whoever had been hoping for the meeting with God,*
*then, truly, the term of God is that which arrives.*
*And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.* (29:5)
*Whoever struggled, he struggles only for himself.*
*Then, truly, God is Sufficient for the worlds.* (29:6)
*And those who believed and do*
*as ones in accord with morality,*
*certainly, We will absolve them of their evil deeds*
*and We will give recompense for the fairer*
*of what they had been doing.* (29:7)
*And We charged the human being with goodness*
*to ones who are his parents*
*and if they struggled with* ***you*** *that* ***you*** *ascribe partners with Me,*
*that of which for* ***you*** *there is no knowledge*
*then, obey them no*
*To Me is your return and I will tell yo*
*of what you had been doing.* (29:8)
*And those who believed*
*and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*We will, certainly, cause them to enter*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (29:9)
*And of humanity is he who says:*
*We believed in God.*
*But, when he was maligned for the sake of God,*
*he mistook the persecution by humanity for a punishment by God.*
*And if help drew near from* ***your*** *Lord,*
*they would, surely, say: We had been with you.*
*Is not God greater in knowledge*
*of what is in the breasts of beings?* (29:10)
*And, certainly, God knows those who believed*
*and, certainly, He knows the ones who are hypocrites.* (29:11)

# APPENDIX 2: CORRELATION BETWEEN THE PRESENT ORDER OF CHAPTERS IN THE QURAN AND THEIR CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER

1 = 96
2 = 68
3 = 73
4 = 74
5 = 1
6 = 111
7 = 81
8 = 87
9 = 92
10 = 89
11 = 93
12 = 94
13 = 103
14 = 100
15 = 108
16 = 102
17 = 107
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19 = 105
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92 = 4
93 = 99
94 = 57
95 = 47
96 = 13
97 = 55
98 = 76
99 = 65
100 = 78
101 = 59
102 = 24
103 = 22
104 = 63
105 = 58
106 = 49
107 = 66
108 = 64
109 = 61
110 = 62
111 = 48
112 = 5
113 = 9
114 = 110

## NOTE TO THE TEXT

1. Mohammad Hashim Kamali, "Reading the Signs."

## NOTES TO THE EPILOGUE

1. Waqidi's (748-822 CE) account ends here according to Muir (although it does appear in the .Rizwi Frizer et. al translation of The Life of Muhammad (al-Waqidi's Kitab al-Maghazi. What edition was Muir translating from?) Ibn Hisham (d. 833 CE) adds the following: O people! You have rights demandable of your wives, and they have rights demandable of you. Upon them it is incumbent not to violate their conjugal faith nor commit any act of open impropriety; which things if they do, you have authority shut them up in separate apartments and to beat them with stripes, yet not severely. But if they refrain therefrom, clothe them and feed them suitably. And treat your women well: for they are with you as captives and prisoners. They have not power over anything as regards themselves. And you have verily taken them on the security of God: and have made their persons lawful unto you by the words of God. (Ibn Ishaq with notes from Ibn Hishami p 436. Ibn Ishaq's dates are 704-761-770 CE. As the birth date of Ibn Hisham is not certain, all three, Waqidi, Ibn Hisham and Ibn Ishaq were contemporaries who may or may not have met. Further research needs to be done regarding this passage as it has caused great controvery over the centuries.)

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LALEH BAKHTIAR

# CRITICAL THINKING

## THE MESSENGER RETURNS TO GOD

AND WHO ARE
PROPHETS, MESSENGERS AND/OR ONES WHO ARE
SENT INCLUDING THEIR MOTHERS, WIVES,
DAUGHTERS AND OTHER FEMALE RELATIONS

THE YEAR
24
OF THE REVELATION
(11 AH/CE 632)

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# Critical Thinking
# The Messenger Returns to God
# The Year
# 24
# of the Revelation
# (11 AH/CE 632)
# and
# Prophets, Messengers and/or
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# Including Their
# Mothers, Wives, Daughters,
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Laleh Bakhtiar

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# Year 24 of the Revelation
# The Messenger Returns to God

**Muharram 1, 11 AH-Rabi Awwal 12, 11 AH/**
**March 29, 632-June 8, 632 CE**


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# PREFACE

## EXPLANATION OF THE CRITICAL THINKING QURANIC STUDIES TEXTBOOK SERIES

There are thirty books in this series. Books entitled *The Year 1* to *The Year 24* consist of one book for each year of the revelation. They each include the relevant chapter (*surah*) or chapters (when they are short) or sections (*ruku*) (when there are multiple sections in a particular chapter). The chapters are numbered according to the chronological order of the Quranic chapters provided by al-Azhar University as the officially accepted order of revelation.

Whereas in the other 23 Years of this series, the chapters' or sections' signs (*ayat*) are given according to the 558 *ruku* or sections of the 114 chapters of the Quran, in this present work, *The Year 24*, only Chapter 110 appears as the last chapter revealed. In the other years, each is followed by the sign(s) of a particular section (*ruku*). Each section (*ruku*) is followed by a commentary by one of the well-known commentators. Then, the history at the time of the specific Quranic section in question is given. Finally, at the end of each section (*ruku*) there is an exercise and assessment for students to use while they are developing critical thinking skills as they learn HOW the Quran teaches thinking.

The remaining books are: *Book 25: Adam, Cain and Abel, Enoch (Idris), Noah, Hud and the People of Aad; Saleh and the People of Thamud*; *Book 26: Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Lot, Jacob (Israel), Joseph and Job*; *Book 27: Moses, Aaron, Children of Jacob (Israel), Jethro (Shuayb), Joshua, Khidr* and *Samuel; Book 28: David, Solomon, Elijah (Ilyas), Elisha (Alyasa), Jonah (Younis), Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl), Ezra (Uzayr), Dhul Qarnayn (Cyrus the Great or Alexander the Great), Luqman, Zechariah, John the Baptist (Yahya), Mary and Jesus.*

Books 25-28 are devoted to the Quranic stories of all other Prophets and Messengers in order of their dates. The last two are: *Book 29: The Life of Prophet Muhammad from Birth to the Revelation* and *Book 30: Teacher's Manual*. The last, Book 30 has been prepared for the teacher's Lesson Plans.

## SOURCES

The sources for the history include the works of Ibn Ishaq, Ibn Hashim, Waqidi, Ibn Sad and commentaries by Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn, Tustari and Sayyid Qutb. The sources for the commentaries of Ibn Abbas, Jalalayn and Tustari have been used with the permission of the publisher, the Royal Institute of Ahl al-Bayt in Jordan. They are available on their website www.altafsir.com.

The inclusion of excerpted commentaries (*tafsir*) by Sayyid Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran* (available online) in this Critical Thinking Quranic Studies Textbook Series is because Sayyid Qutb is considered by some extremist groups as their intellectual source. By including excerpts from his eighteen volume Quranic commentary, extremists cannot disclaim the importance of learning critical thinking as this series is to help young adults learn HOW to think using self-realization (*tahqiq*) and critical thinking (*furqan*) skills taught by the Quran.

This in order to arm young adults with the ability to choose reason over any irrational extremist ideology that is presented to them.

## TERMINOLOGY

All Quranic signs are translations from *The Sublime Quran*. For the Muslim, the Quran is the Word (Logos) of God. It is this Word of God that has inspired artists, artisans, poets, philosophers and writers, those who had been the exponents of Islamic culture and civilization for almost 1500 years. Yesterday and today's Muslim wants to know more about each Word that God chose for His revelation through the Quran. This realization, in turn, prompted the translation of *The Sublime Quran*, an attempt to give the sense of unity within the revelation to a non-Arabic speaking reader.

There are several points to note about the terminology used in the translation of the Quranic text and the commentaries.

1. The blessed Prophet did not bring a new religion; he came to confirm what was right in the messages of the previous Prophets. Does this translation speak to the universality of the Quran? The Quran tells the Prophet, the mercy to all of humanity, to speak to people in their own language. Following his example, in addition to the translation being unbounded by time, in several sensitive cases, the word chosen to translate an Arabic word is also of a universal or inclusive rather than a particular or exclusive nature. This adds to the broadening of the perspective and scope of the Quran so that it becomes inclusive rather than exclusive to one particular group of people. In other words, in this way a larger audience can relate to its message.

2. The actual word "Islam" does not appear any where in the Quranic text. The Quran refers to the verb, "to submit" (*aslama*), submission (*sallama*), and ones who submit (*muslimun*), but not specifically to the word "Islam" while it refers to itself (the Quran) from the very beginning of the revelation (68:35).

3. As previously indicated, the four books (Book 25, Book 26, Book 27 and Book 28) are the stories of the other Prophets and Messengers mentioned in the Quran. While these stories do have lessons to be learned by the Prophet and those who heard the revelations as well as for us today, they do not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad and his prophethood following the beginning of the revelation. What remains in these books of the Quranic signs in the 24 years of the chronological Quran relate directly to him, what he did and what he was told to say. This allows us to understand his life directly from the Quranic message, the Quranic Sunnah, without any interruption of the stories about previous Prophets and Messengers.

4. Most English translations of the Quran refer to the "Children of Israel." The word "Israel" when used in the Quran refers to Jacob, the patriarch of the children who followed him such as Joseph. Therefore, it should be the "Children of Jacob" as it appears in these texts.

5. The word "*kufr*" and "*kafir*" have been translated here as "ingratitude" and "ungrateful" where the context allows. This is the first meaning of the word and many of us in our lifetime have met Muslims who are "ungrateful." It is the un-

grateful Muslims who practice intolerance by declaring anyone who says: Peace be upon you (*as-salam alaykum*) as a non-believer (with what is called *takfir*). In those cases, it would not be suitable to call them "unbelievers" or "infidels," but it is clearly appropriate to refer to them as being "ungrateful" and this would include the early Quraysh who ridiculed the Prophet and fought against the Quranic message of love, forgiveness and peace.

6. Yet another example of the use of inclusive language in an attempt to speak to people in their own language, is the use of God instead of Allah. Many English speaking Muslims as well as many of the English translations of the Quran to date, use Allah when speaking English instead of God. The intention on the part of the speaker is to maintain a sense of piety. They feel that using Allah in English moves them in that direction. Many even claim that the word Allah cannot be translated.

However well intentioned a person may be, the use of the word Allah instead of God when speaking English, first of all, does not follow the Quranic verse that tells the Prophet to speak to people in their own language. Subsequently, it does not follow the Sunnah of the Prophet who did speak to people in their own language.

In addition, it creates a divide between Muslims who use the word and the English speaking people of various faiths to whom they are speaking. In effect, it creates the illusion that there is more than One God—Allah and God. The response of the English speaking person of another faith is to say: I do not understand your religion; you have a different God than I do and you call Him Allah.

It needs to be clearly explained to English speaking Muslims that, unlike what they may feel, they do not have a monopoly on the word Allah. Arabic speaking Christians and Arabic speaking Jews also refer to God as Allah. The Old Testament and New Testament, when translated into Arabic, use Allah for God.

English speaking Muslims, therefore, need to recall the message of the Quran that God is One (*tawhid*). In addition, the Prophet did not bring a new religion but confirmed what was correct in the messages of previous Prophets, namely, that God is One. Finally, they need to follow the example of the Prophet, as the Quran says he is the model or example to be followed, by speaking to people in their own language.

7. The Arabic language, much like old English, has the second person singular (masculine: *anta* where the verb ends in *ka*). The English equivalent is the subject: "thou" or the object: "thee" or the possessive: "thy." As these are no longer in common usage in English, wherever the original Arabic uses one of these terms, the word "**you**" or "**your**" appear in bold font so that the reader knows the original was the second person singular. When the Quran is speaking directly to the Prophet, it uses the pronoun "thee" or "thou" so it is an important distinction to make.

Using you (second person plural) is done to help English speaking readers, recognizing that using the second person plural pronoun you (masculine: *antum* where the verb ends in masculine: *kum*) for God is to intimate that God is plural, the only sin in the Quran that is unforgivable. By indicating the pronoun **you** in bold font

indicates the true intention.

8. For the Arabic word "*ayah*," the English word used in these texts is "sign" rather than the Biblical term, "verse."

9. Several of the signs were abrogated over time. However the indication of a sign being abrogated was done after the complete revelation of the Quran. Whether or not a sign was later abrogated does not change the fact that the first Muslims who listened to the Quran, heard the signs that may have later been said to have been abrogated.

10. The first number that appears when the Quranic Chapters begin refers to the chapter number in the chronological order of the revelation so that Quranic Chapter 110 which was the last to be revealed is number 114 in the chronological order.

11. It is to be noted that whenever the name of Muhammad, Prophet Muhammad or the Prophet are used, one may say a silent prayer of blessings for him.

### CRITICAL THINKING• COMPONENT

Quranic critical thinking (*furqan*, discernment) is a process that analyzes how we think. It is a 3-step process: **I**: Quranic critical thinkers apply the **Nine Intellectual Standards** (clarity, accuracy, precision, relevance, depth, breadth, logic, significance and fairness) to: **II**: **The Eight Elements of Reasoning** (point of view, purpose, questions, information, inferences, concepts, assumptions, implications): in order to develop: **III**: **The Seven Moral Traits** (belief in One God (*tawhid*), God-consciousness (*taqwa*), integrity through moral discipline, empowering courage, persevering in goodness, empathic altruism and being fair and just). The signs (*ayat*) in each section (*ruku*) teach the one of the **Nine Intellectual Standards** or one of the **Eight Elements of Reasoning** or one of the **Seven Moral Traits**.

This is the key to critical thinking. We do not learn "what" to think, but, rather, "how" to think. Using the **Eight Elements of Reasoning** as an example, critical thinking can be summarized in the following sentence: Whenever we think, we think for a **purpose** within **a point of view** based on **assumptions** leading to **implications** and **consequences**. We use **concepts, ideas** and **theories** to **interpret data, facts** and **experiences** in order to answer **questions, solve problems,** and **resolve issues**.

The point of view in all cases is that of the Quranic message and the various individuals and groups that it addresses as this series is a course in Quranic Studies as well as a course in the chronological history of the life of the blessed Prophet (*sira*). Each student is encouraged to come up with his or her own questions and responses to those questions in order to learn how to become the Quranic critical thinker as the Quranic teaches us HOW to think.

It is important to note that there is no correct or incorrect answer. The important point is to go through the process with as many of the sections as one is able to do. Little by little, this will help each student or reader to develop into critical thinkers or "discerners" of the Quranic message creating a bond between them and the Quranic message.

Once we learn to analyze signs and sections of the Quranic message, we will close the gap between our beliefs and how we live our lives. They will each motivate the other. There will no longer be a disconnect between the two so that we claim to bear witness with our tongues, but our hearts are not on the same page as what our tongue expresses. It is important to note that the order of **The Nine Intellectual Standards** or **The Eight Elements of Reasoning** or **The Seven Moral Traits** is not important. With the grace of God, once all are present, they coalesce into a sense of unity in our thoughts and behaviors.

THE NINE STANDARDS

1. CLARITY (UNDERSTANDABLE, TO BE CLEAR: *TABAYYANA*)
2. ACCURACY (TO BE FREE FROM ERROR: *AL-RUSHUDU MINA L-GHAYI*)
3. PRECISION (EXACT TO THE NECESSARY LEVEL, TO BE PRECISE: 'AHKAMA)
4. RELEVANCE (TO MAKE RELEVANT, TO RELATE: QASSA)
5. DEPTH (CONTAINING COMPLEXITIES AND INTERRELATIONSHIPS: *'ARADA*)
6. BREADTH (INVOLVING MULTIPLE VIEWPOINTS: *'ARADA*)
7. LOGIC (REASONABLE: *'AQALA*)
8. SIGNIFICANCE (FOCUSING ON THE IMPORTANT, NOT TRIVIAL, TO BE WORTHY: *AHL*)
9. FAIRNESS (NOT SELF-SERVING OR EGOCENTRIC), TO BE FAIR: (HASAN)

THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING

1. EMBODY POINT OF VIEW, FRAME OF REFERENCE, PERSPECTIVE (RECOLLECT, BEAR IN MIND, TAKE FOR GRANTED: *TADHAKKUR*)
2. GENERATE PURPOSE, AIM, GOAL, OBJECTIVE: (CONSIDER: *RA'A*)
3. RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES: (REFLECT: *TAFAKKARA*)
4. USE INFORMATION, DATA, FACTS, OBSERVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, REASONED JUDGMENTS (EVIDENCE: *BASIRAH*)
5. MAKE INTERPRETATIONS, INFERENCES, CONCLUSION, SOLUTIONS (UNDERSTANDING: *TABASSUR*)
6. UTILIZE CONCEPTS, DEFINITIONS, PRINCIPLES, MODELS AND VOCABULARY (RECALL: *IDHDHAKARA*)
7. MAKE ASSUMPTIONS, PREPOSITIONS, TAKING FOR GRANTED (OPINIONS: *ZUNUN*)
8. GENERATE IMPLICATIONS, CONSEQUENCES (PONDER, EVALUATE: *TADABBUR*)

### THE EIGHT ELEMENTS OF REASONING IN DETAIL

1. Embodies **Point of View, Frame of Reference, Perspective** (Recollect, Bear in Mind, Take to Heart (*tadhakkur*)):Whenever we think, we think within a point of view. What is the Quranic point of view in

these signs? Does the Quran follow universal intellectual values of clarity, precision, consistency, relevance, sound evidence, good reasons, logic, fairness?

2. Generate **Purpose, Aim, Goal, Objective** (Consider (*ra'a*)): My purpose in addressing the Quranic purpose in these signs is . . .? Know exactly what you are after. Make sure you are not operating with a hidden agenda and that your announced and real purposes are the same. Whenever we think, we think for a purpose. What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs? Are there multiple points of view?

3. Raise **Questions, Problems, Issues** (Reflect (*tafakkara*)): What is the key question I am trying to answer. State the question as clearly and precisely as you can. Details are very important.

4. Use **Information, Data, Facts, Observations, Experiences, Reasoned Judgments** (Evidence (*basirah*)): Actively seek the information most relevant to the question. Include in that information options for action, both short-term and long-term. We use experiences, facts and data that the Quran gives us. What information does the Quran give in these signs? What information do I need to answer my question?

5. Make **Interpretations, Inferences, Conclusions, Solutions** (Understanding (*tabassur*)): After reasoning (discerning) the above points, decide what the best answer (conclusion) to the question is. What inferences, judgments or conclusions do these signs make? What are my most fundamental inferences or conclusions based on these Quranic signs?

6. Utilize **Concepts, Theories, Definitions, Axioms, Laws, Principles, Models, Vocabulary** (Recall (*idhdhakara*)): The most important concepts, theories or ideas I need to use in my thinking are. . . ? Figure out all significant ideas needed to understand and answer your question. You may need to analyze these concepts. Use a good dictionary. My inferences or conclusions are based on Quranic concepts and theories. What is the most basic concept in my question? What Quranic terms have I learned?

7. Make **Assumptions, Presuppositions, Taking for Granted** (Opinions (*zunun*)): Some important assumptions I am using in my thinking are . . . ? Figure out what you are taking for granted. Watch out for self-serving or unjustified assumptions. The Quranic point of view is based on some assumptions. What assumptions is the Quran using in its reasoning? What assumptions am I using in my reasoning from the Quranic revelation?

8. Generate **Implications, Consequences** (Ponder (*tadabbur*)): Evaluate options. Take into account the advantages and disadvantages of possible decisions before acting? What consequences are likely to follow from this or that decision? The Quranic assumptions and my assumptions lead to implications and consequences. What are the

implications of the Quranic reasoning? What are the implications of my reasoning? Am I correct in understanding the Quranic implications?

### THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)
4. EMPOWERING COURAGE (*BATASHA*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)
7. BEING FAIR AND JUST (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED: *RASHAD*)

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My gratitude to Professor Mohammad Hashim Kamali for his permission to use his excellent essay on "Reading the Signs: A Quranic Perspective on Thinking," as the Introduction to this work. His work gave me the courage to publish what I had learned of critical thinking when translating the Quran into English. I realized that not only did the Quran teach me what to think, but more importantly for critical thinking, it taught me HOW to think and Professor Kamali's essay confirmed my intuitions as I hope it does for the readers of this textbook.

I am also grateful to the Center for Critical Thinking and, particularly, the online work done in youtube videos and other works by the educator-founders-members of the Critical Thinking Community, namely, the late Dr. Richard Paul and his wife and constant collaborator, Dr. Linda Elder. All indications of • throughout the text refers to quotes or paraphrases from their excellent work as part of the Critical Thinking Community, www.criticalthinking.org. My attempt has been for all the quotes and paraphrases used here to follow fair copyright use.

Whereas Drs. Paul and Elder may not have used their work in religious educational settings, due to the separation of church and state in the educating of American students, learning from their works it became clear that their teachings can help Muslim students, as well, if their method is presented through the content of the Quran. If Muslim students come to understand that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking, that is, discernment (*furqan*), HOW to think, they will be armed with the intellectual skills needed —as active rather than passive thinkers—to confront Islamic extremism.

One of the main scholars that Islamic extremists use in their propaganda is Seyyed Qutb. In order to further arm Muslim students for any confrontation they may have with Islamic extremists who would quote that their ideas come from Seyyed Qutb, I have used his Quranic commentary, *In the Shade of the Quran* in this work. Students will learn how, contrary to what they may be told or taught, in many cases, Seyyed Qutb's commentary (indicated by °) speaks of and describes the way that the Quran actually teaches critical thinking and Islamist extremists cannot say that I have left out their scholars.

Last, but certainly not least, I wish to thank Kazi Publications and its founder, Liaquat Ali, for his constant support and encouragement to forge new areas of Islamic thought with the hope that the banner of Islamic intellectual sciences (*al-'aqli*) will be passed to young students as they confront a Muslim world deeply entrenched in Islamic narrative sciences (*al-naqli*).

# Part One

## 114. Quranic Chapter 110: The Help (al-Nasr) Signs 110:1-110:3

*When the help of God drew near and the victory*
*and you saw humanity entering into the way*
*of life of God in units,*
*then, glorify the praise of your Lord*
*and ask for His forgiveness.*
*Truly, He had been ever*
*The Accepter of Repentance.* (110:1-110:3)

### History

One of the traditions related about Chapter 110 is that when it was revealed, the Messenger called his daughter, Fatima. He told her that he had received intimations of his approaching end. Fatima burst into tears. He said: Why do you weep, my child? Be comforted for truly you are the first of my people that shall rejoin me. Fatima dried her tears and smiled pleasantly. She was to die within six months from the death of her father. He had called her "the Queen of all the females of Paradise after Mary, the mother of Jesus."[1]

### Critical Thinking•

The word "clarification" or to be clear (*bayan*) occurs over two hundred times in the Quran. The Quranic message describes itself as being clear, having clear signs, making things clear. The clarification in the Quranic message is to guide us to the distinction between truth and error.

Clarity means to be understandable such that the meaning can be grasped; to be free from confusion or ambiguity, to remove obscurities. Clarity is essential as an opening or beginning or gateway standard because if a statement is unclear, it cannot determined if it is accurate or relevant. In fact, nothing can be determined about it because students may not as yet know what it means. They can only assume that we understand a thought when we can elaborate on it, illustrate it and give an example of it.

In order to help students clarify their thinking, have them try to figure out the meaning of what the Quranic message here is saying. Have them explain their understanding of an issue mentioned in the following Quranic section (*ruku*) to someone else to help clarify it in their own mind.

Have them practice summarizing in their own words what the Quranic section or sign(s) is saying. Then ask:

Did you understand the sign(s) correctly?
Did you agree or disagree with what your classmate said before you clearly understood what the Quranic text is saying?

Did you feel that you were thinking clearly?
Did you feel your thinking was vague, muddled, deceptive or misleading?

Have them:

Summarize in their own words what they think the Quran said.
Have them give one point at a time, explain it and elaborate on what they mean.
Mention a life experience that illustrates the point in hand.
Use metaphors or analogies to help them connect their ideas to things they have already understood.

Being clear about what they think when they read a sign(s) of the Quran, helps them understand what the analytic, evaluative and creative process is.

**QUESTIONS THAT FOCUS ON CLARITY IN THINKING INCLUDE•**

Let me state in my own words what I think you just said.
Am I clear about your meaning?
I hear you saying "____."
Am I hearing you correctly, or have I misunderstood you?
What is the main point of this Quranic section?
Can you explain further its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
Can you give an example of its main point on accidental killing of a Muslim?
To give you an analogy...(give an illustration of tyrants who kill believers because they say that they believe in God)
To give you an analogy ... (give an illustration of Muslim tyrants who kill other Muslims because they have determined that these people are not Muslim. They are not Muslim because the only Muslims are the ones who follow their ideology.)
Does such a view go against the Quranic sign? Explain.

**TO CLARIFY STUDENTS' THINKING, CONSIDER ASKING THE FOLLOWING•**

Can you restate the points of the Quranic signs 110:1-110:3 in your own words?
I didn't understand you.
Can you give an example?
Let me tell you what I understand you to be saying.
Did I understand you correctly?

**STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS**

The students should identify the clarity they find in the Quranic Signs here. Then, they should choose a particular sign(s) (*ayah, ayat*) and analyze it(them).

After that, they should show how that sign or those signs fit into the entire section. The above questions should help them do that.

## Student Assessment

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

When I focused on clarity, I began to notice when I was being unclear in communicating with others.
When I was reading, I began to notice when I was clear about what I was reading.

I focused on the four techniques of clarification:

1. Stating what you are saying explicitly and precisely (with careful consideration given to my choice of words),
2. Elaborating on my meaning in other words,
3. Giving examples of what I mean from experiences I have had.
4. I used analogies, metaphors, pictures, or diagrams to illustrate what I meant. In other words, I frequently **stated, elaborated, illustrated** and **exemplified** my points.

# Part Two
# The Messenger Returns to God

## Beginning of the Prophet's Last Illness

Soon after his last pilgrimage, the Prophet became ill. News of this spread in Arabia. Two men, al-Aswad from Yemen and Musaylimah from al-Yamamah, each took advantage of the situation and declared themselves to be Prophets. A short time later, a third man, Tulayhah in the country of Asad, made the same claim. Al-Aswad was a soothsayer and a juggler. He would show people wonderous things to captivate their hearts. Al-Aswad eventually ruled over Yemen for a short time before he was killed while the Messenger was still alive. Both Musaylimah and al-Aswad renounced the Prophet and his leadership. Al-Aswad eventually ruled over Yemen, Musaylimah over al-Yamamah and Tulayhah over Samira. Both Musaylimah and Tulayhah were driven away by the people after the Messenger sent messengers instructing the people to eliminate them.

### History

According to Waqidi, the Messenger's last illness began on a Wednesday, two days before the end of Safar, the day after he had appointed Usama to lead the expedition.[2]

According to al-Tabari: During the month of Muharram (some say on the 25th of Safar), the Messenger ordered the people to undertake an expedition to Syria. He put Usama, the son of his freed slave Zayd ibn al-Harithah, in command over them, ordering him to lead the cavalry into the territory of al-Balqa (a name given by early Muslim authors either to the whole of the Transjordanian territory or the middle part of it. Its geographical meaning is restricted to the limestone plateau between the Wadi al-Zarqa and the Wadi al-Muib. EI[2]) and al-Darum (name of a coastal plain of Palestine. EI[2]) in the land of Palestine. As the people, including Abu Bakr, Umar and Abu Ubaydah ibn al-Jarrah, were preparing for the expedition, the Prophet began to suffer from the sickness by which God took him to what honor and compassion He intended for him.[3]

According to Ibn Ishaq: The Messenger began to suffer from the illness by which God took him to what honor and compassion He intended for him shortly before the end of Safar or in the beginning of Rabi al-Awwal. It began, so I have been told, when he went to Baqi al-Gharqad the middle of the night and prayed for the dead. Then he returned to his family and in the morning his sufferings began.

Abu Muwayhiba, freedman of the Messenger, said: In the middle of the night the Messenger sent for me and told me that he was ordered to pray for the dead in this cemetery and that I was to go with him. I

went and when he stood among them he said: Peace be upon you, O people of the graves! Happy are you that you are so much better off than men here. Dissensions have come like waves of darkness one after the other, the last being worse than the first. Then he turned to me and said: I have been given the choice between the keys of the treasuries of this world and long life here followed by Paradise, and meeting my Lord and Paradise (at once). I urged him to choose the former, but he said that he had chosen the latter. Then he prayed for the dead at Baqi and went away. Then it was that the illness through which God took him began.[4]

Ayisha said: The Messenger returned from the cemetery to find me suffering from a severe headache and I was saying: O my head! He said: Nay, Ayisha, O *my* head! Then he said: Would it distress you if you were to die before me so that I might wrap you in your shroud and pray over you and bury you. I said: By God, it seems to me that if you were to do that you would return to my house and would make a marriage feast with one of your wives. The Messenger smiled and then his pain overcame him as he was going the round his wives until he was overpowered in the house of Maymuna. He called his wives and asked their permission to be nursed in my house. They permitted him, so the Messenger went out walking between two men of his family, Ali ibn Abi Talib and al-Fadl ibn al-Abbas, with the Messenger's feet dragging on the ground while his head was wrapped around until he entered my house.[5]

Then the Messenger's illness worsened and he suffered much pain. He said: Pour seven skins of water from different wells over me so that I may go out to the men and instruct them. We made him sit down in a tub belonging to Hafsa bint Umar and we poured water over him until he cried: Enough, enough!

Abd Allah ibn Masud states: Our beloved Prophet announced his approaching death a month before he died. When the separation drew near, he gathered us in the house of our mother, Ayisha, looked at us intensely while his eyes were shedding tears, and said: Welcome to you. May God treat you with compassion, shelter you, protect you, exalt you, benefit you, give you success, assist you, preserve you, and receive you kindly! I enjoin you to fear God and entrust you to Him. I appoint Him as successor over you and entrust you to Him. *Truly I am a warner to you from Him and a bearer of good tidings.* (11:2) *And rise not up against God.* (44:19) *This is the Last Abode that We will assign to those who want not self-exaltation in the earth nor corruption. And the Ultimate End is for the ones who are Godfearing.* (28:83) *Is there not in hell a place of lodging for ones who increase in pride?* (39:60)

Ibn Abbas states: Thursday, what a Thursday! He said: The Messenger of God's pain became so severe that he said: Give me an inkpot

and a shoulder blade so that I may have something written for you and you will never go astray after me. His companions wrangled over it. They said: Do you see him talking nonsense? The Messenger of God became grieved and annoyed and asked them to leave. It did not befit them to carry on a dispute before a Prophet. Some people said: What is the matter with him? Is he talking nonsense? Ask him for an explanation. When they went back, repeating those remarks to him, he replied: Leave me alone, the state I am in is better than that for which you are calling me. He charged them with three things: Expel the polytheists from the Arabian Peninsula; give presents to the delegations as I used to do. Said ibn Jubayr states that Ibn Abbas became silent about the third command intentionally or that he said that he had forgotten it.[6]

Waqidi: About this time, recognizing Umar and some other chief men in the room, he called out: Bring me ink and a shoulder blade that I may record for you a writing which shall prevent your going astray forever. Umar said: He wanders in his mind. Is not the Quran sufficient for us? When the women were about to bring the writing materials, Umar chided them: Quiet! he said. You behave as women always do. When your master falls sick, you burst into tears and the moment he recovers a little, you begin embracing him. The Messenger, jealous even on his death-bed of the good name of his wives, was aroused by these words and said: Truly, they are better than you are.[7]

In the course of this day, the Messenger called Ayisha to him and said: Where is that gold which I gave you to keep? She replied that it was by her. He said that she should spend it at once in charity. Then he dozed off in a half conscious state. Some time after that, he asked if she had done as he desired. She replied: Not yet. He called for the gold, which was apparently a portion of the tithe income. She placed it in his hand and counted six dinars. He directed that it should be divided among certain indigent families. Then, lying down, he said: Now I am at peace. Verily it would not have become me to meet my Lord and this gold in my possession.

Waqidi: His strength now rapidly sank. He seemed to be aware that death was drawing near. He called for a pitcher of water and wetting his face, prayed, saying: O Lord, I beseech Thee, assist me in the agonies of death! Then, three times he called out earnestly: Gabriel come close to me.[8]

## THE MESSENGER OF GOD RETURNS TO GOD

There are many traditions given by Waqidi explaining how the messenger used a form of prayer accompanied by rubbing or blowing. During his last hours he began to blow upon himself repeating a prayer which he had been in the habit of praying over those who were very sick.

When he ceased from weakness, Ayisha took up the task and continued to blow upon him and recite the same prayer. The prayer was: Take away evil and misfortune, O **You** Lord of humanity! Grant a cure, for **You** are the Physician. There is no cure besides **Yours**. It leaves nothing of the disease behind. He prayed in a whisper: Lord, grant me pardon and join me to the companionship on high. Then, at intervals: Eternity in Paradise! Pardon! Yes, the blessed companionship on high! He stretched himself gently. Then all was still.

Yahya ibn Abbad ibn Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr from his father told him that he heard Ayisha say: The Messenger died in my bosom during my turn I had wronged none in regard to him. It was due to my ignorance and extreme youth that the Messenger died in my arms. Then I laid his head on a pillow and got up, beating my breast and slapping my face along with th other women.

When Abu Bakr heard what was happening, he came to the door of the mosque as Umar was speaking to the people. He paid no attention, but went in to Ayisha's house to the Messenger, who was lying covered by a mantle of Yamani cloth. He went and uncovered his face and kissed him, saying: You are dearer than my father and mother. You have tasted the death which God had decreed: a second death will never overtake you. Then he placed the mantle on the Messenger's face and went out. Umar was still talking and he said gently: Umar, be quiet. But Umar refused and went on talking. When Abu Bakr saw that he would not be silent, he bent forward to the people who, when they heard his words, came to him and left Umar. Giving thanks and praise to God he said: O men, if any of you worship Muhammad, Muhammad is dead: if anyone worships God, God is alive, immortal. Then he recited this verse: *And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Surely Messengers have passed away before him. Then if he should die or be slain, will you turn about on your heels? And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all. And God will give recompense to the ones who are thankful.* (3:144) It was as though the people did not know that this verse[9] had come down until Abu Bakr recited it that day. The people took it from him and it was (constantly) in their mouths. Umar said: By God, when I heard Abu Bakr recite these words I was dumbfounded so that my legs would not bear me and I fell to the ground owing that the Messenger was indeed dead. It was Monday June 8, 632 CE.

# Part Three
# Prophets, Messengers and/or Ones Who Are Sent

## Segment 1: Prophets and Messengers

In this section we will study the signs that tell us the advantage some of the Prophets and Messengers had over the other; that both Prophets and Messengers were sent to past societies; that in spite of the advantage some have other others, we do not separate and divide between anyone of them; both are commanded to obey God; that God firms the mind of the Prophets by relating to them about the Messengers; how Satan tempts both of them; how some Prophets and some Messengers were killed without right; and how both had enemies.

We will first explore the similarities that Prophets and Messengers share according to the Quranic signs before we look at the particular characteristics of each. Ones who were both Prophets and Messengers include: Ishmael, Noah, Moses, Aaron, Jesus (he is also the Messiah) and Muhammad (he is also the Seal of Prophets).

### Advantage of Some Over Others

The advantages given to some of the Prophets and Messengers and not to others has been determined by the environment, nature and scope of their mission. Some were sent to just a single tribe, some to larger nations, some to just a single generation while the mission of some was to all nations and all generations. The other point to be made is that the various advantages depended on the distinct qualities they had that they brought to their people based on the needs of the people of that time.

*And your Lord is greater in knowledge of whoever are in the heavens and in and on the earth.*
*And, certainly, We gave advantage to some of the Prophets over others. And to David We gave Psalms.* (17:55)

#### Commentary°

When God says: *And to David We gave the Psalms*, this is one example of what God gave to one of His Prophets and not to others. The fact is that revelation is more lasting a miracle than any supernatural events that may be witnessed by only a handful of people.

Your Lord knows best all who are in the heavens and the earth, thus endowing them each one with what He wills, according to the measure of their states. Moses, with being spoken to; Abraham, with

friendship; and Muhammad with the night journey; and *We gave David the Psalms.*

*These are the Messengers. We gave advantage,*
*some of them over some others.*
*Of them are those to whom God spoke and some of them*
*He exalted in degree.*
*And We gave Jesus son of Mary*
*the clear portents and confirmed him*
*with the hallowed Spirit.*
*And if God willed, those who were after them*
*would not have fought one another*
*after the clear portents drew near them,*
*except they were at variance.*
*And some of them believed,*
*while some of them were ones who are ungrateful.*
*And if God willed, they would not have fought one another;*
*except God accomplishes what He wants.* (2:253)

*And Messengers We related to you before*
*and Messengers We relate to you not.*
*God spoke directly to Moses, speaking directly.* (4:164)

## COMMENTARY°

It is then the same procession moving forward throughout human history, conveying a single message, bringing the same guidance to warn and to give a piece of happy news. It includes a group of chosen men like Noah, Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, David, Moses, as well as others whom God spoke about to His Messenger in the Quran and still others about whom He told the Prophet nothing.

It is a procession which includes people from various nations and various countries, living at different times. Nothing gives any of them distinction over others. No consideration of race, nation, place, or time divides them. They all give the same guiding light, to warn and motivate, and they all try to lead human beings towards the light. This applies to those of them who were sent to a particular tribe, community, nation, city, country, or the one who was sent to all humanity, namely, Muhammad, the last and seal of all Messengers.

Every one of them received revelations from God. None of them invented anything of his own accord. If Moses was spoken to directly by God, this was simply one aspect of revelation and none of us knows how it happened. The Quran, which is the only authentic source we have on such matters, has not given us any details. The only thing we know is that God gave this revelation in words. How and in what man-

ner or in what sense or power Moses used to receive it we do not know. All that is part of the knowledge God has kept to Himself. If the Quran does not speak to us about it, then any interpretation is simply guesswork lacking foundation.

## BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS WERE SENT TO ANCIENT SOCIETIES

*And how many a Prophet sent We among the ancient ones!* (43:6)

*And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you*
*to partisans of the ancient ones.* (15:10)

## SEPARATE AND DIVIDE NOT AMONG PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

While Quranic signs confirm that both Prophets and Messengers were sent to previous civilizations, the Quran tells us that we should not separate or divide between them, accepting some and rejecting others.

*Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers*
*and they want to separate and divide between God*
*and His Messenger and they say: We believe in some*
*and we disbelieve in others, they want that they take themselves to a*
*way between that.* (4:150)

*Say: We believed in God and what was caused to descend to us,*
*and what was caused to descend to Abraham and Ishmael*
*and Isaac and Jacob and the Tribes*
*and whatever was given Moses and Jesus,*
*and whatever was given to the Prophets from their Lord.*
*We separate and divide not between anyone of them.*
*And we are ones who submit to Him.* (2:136)

### COMMENTARY°

The principle of the unity and universality of faith, and the unity of all Prophets and Messengers all through the ages, is the cornerstone of the faith of those who are in submission to God (*islam*). It lends legitimacy to the Muslim community's claim to the legacy of Abraham and to the right of trusteeship for God's way of life in this world. It is this principle as a fundamental backbone of this way of life that gives it its universal characteristic which brings people together under the same banner, free of all prejudice or discrimination. It makes the Muslim community open to all people in a spirit of genuine love and peace.

This next Quranic sign states that the Messenger Muhammad affirms the truth of what was revealed to him. He makes no distinction between any of God's Messengers.

*The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him*
*from his Lord as do the ones who believe.*
*All believed in God and His angels*
*and His Books and His Messengers saying:*
*We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers.*
*And they said: We heard and we obeyed,*
*so grant **Your** forgiveness, Our Lord!*
*And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285)

## BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS ARE SERVANTS OF GOD

*Then, after them succeeded a succession*
*who wasted the formal prayer and followed their lusts.*
*So they will meet error, but the ones who repented and believed*
*and did as ones in accord with morality.*
*For those will enter the Garden*
*and they will not be wronged at all,*
*Gardens of Eden which The Merciful promised His servants*
*in the unseen. Truly, He, His promise*
*had been that which is kept.*
*They will not hear in them idle talk, nothing but: Peace* (salam).
*And they will have their provision in them*
*in the early morning dawn and evening.*
*This is the Garden which We will give as inheritance*
*to whomever of Our servants who had been devout.*
*And we come forth not but by the command of **your** Lord.*
*To Him belongs whatever is in advance of us*
*and whatever is behind us*
*and whatever is in between that.*
*And **your** Lord had not been forgetful,*
*the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and what is between them!*
*So worship Him and maintain **you** patience in His worship.*
*Have **you** known any namesake for Him?* (19:59-19:65)

## COMMENTARY°

Yet such highly God-fearing people [as the previous Prophets and Messengers] are succeeded by generations that are distant from God, by people who neglect their prayer and deny it as a duty incumbent on them. Instead, they follow only their lusts and indulge in every loose activity. The difference is so clear and the contrast complete.

## Both Prophets and Messengers Are Commanded to Obey God

*And whoever obeys God and the Messenger,*
*those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets*
*and just persons and the witnesses*
*and the ones in accord with morality.*
*And excellent were those as allies!* (4:69)

## God Firms the Mind of Prophets by Relating to Them About the Messengers

The stories of the previous Prophets and Messengers (as we will see) were explained to the Messenger and his Companions whose minds became firm in certitude that this was the truth. The stories are a reminder and admonishment for the believers.

*And all that We relate to* ***you*** *[Muhammad] of the tidings*
*of the Messengers is so that We make* ***your*** *mind firm by it.*
*And The Truth drew near* ***you*** *in this,*
*and an admonishment and a reminder*
*for the ones who believe.* (11:120)

## Satan Tempts Both Prophets and Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent

*And We sent not before* ***you*** *[Muhammad] any Messenger*
*nor Prophet, but when he fantasized.*
*Satan cast fantasies into him.*
*But God nullifies what Satan casts.*
*Again, God set clear His signs.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (22:52)

### Commentary°

God says, in effect: We did not send before you (Muhammad) any Messenger or Prophet but that when he recited (the Book) Satan cast something into his recitation. That is, if we recite the Book and our animal soul (*nafs al-ammara*, passions) becomes aware or conscious that we are reciting the recitation, Satan casts something into it, for Satan has a partnership with our animal soul in this, and that noticing of the recitation comes from the desire of our animal soul and its attraction to pleasure (lust).

However, if we then witnesses the One remembered instead of the remembrance itself, our heart will become oblivious to the recitation. We will not witness anything besides our Master. Consequently Satan

will, instead, become one of our captives. Is it not clear how if we are inattentive in our recitation or in our remembrance of our Lord, Mighty and Majestic is He, our heart acquiesces in the basest pleasures of our animal soul and thus can the enemy Satan get at us.

The whispering (*waswas*) is of two kinds, one of which is from the lower self and the other from Satan. That which persists in coming is from the lower self, and assistance against it is sought through fasting, prayer and propriety. However, that which comes, but then withdraws is from Satan, and assistance against it is sought through the recitation of the Quran and remembrance of God.

God may cause whatever aspersion Satan may cast to become a trial for all in whose spiritual hearts have a sickness and all whose spiritual hearts are hardened. Indeed, all who are thus sinning are most deeply in the wrong.

## BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS WERE KILLED UNRIGHTFULLY

The killing of those who command to justice or equity in human life is a reference to those who speak for the implementation of the code God has given for human life, a code based on justice and that, according to the signs, it alone can maintain absolute justice.

*Abasement was stamped on them wherever they were come upon*
*—but those with a rope to God and a rope to humanity*
*— and they drew the burden of anger from God*
*and wretchedness was stamped on them.*
*That is because they had been ungrateful for the signs of God*
*and kill the Prophets without right.*
*That is because they rebelled*
*and had been exceeding the limits.* (3:112)

### COMMENTARY°

Denying God's revelation, whether it is an attitude adopted outright or a refusal to implement it practically, the killing of prophets without any justification and the killing of people who enjoin fairness and justice, as well as disobedience and transgression, are all reasons for incurring God's wrath and bringing about defeat, disgrace and humiliation upon oneself. These reasons are still present today among the lost offspring of the Muslims who call themselves, without justification, Muslims. They present these very qualifications to their Lord and they get their fair reward: They receive all that God imposes of disgrace and humiliation. Some of them may well ask: Why do we suffer defeat when we are Muslims? Let those who pose such a question

first reflect on what the true nature of Islam is, and who the true Muslims are?

*Truly, those who are ungrateful for the signs of God*
*and kill the Prophets without right*
*and kill those who command to equity from among humanity,*
*then, give you to them the good tidings*
*of a painful punishment.* (3:21)

## COMMENTARY°

We note that the denial and rejection of God's revelation is coupled in the Quranic statement with the totally unjust killing of the Prophets—for there can be no right respected when a Prophet is killed. Furthermore, the killing of those who enjoin equity in human life is a reference to those who advocate the implementation of the Quran God has laid down for human life, which is based on justice and which alone can maintain absolute justice.

*Truly, We will, certainly, help Our Messengers*
*and those who believed in this present life*
*and on a Day when the ones who bear witness*
*will stand up.* (40:51)

There will be help for the Prophets and Messengers (40:51) with assistance and victory over the enemies. On the Day of Judgment, the angels (those who stand up and bear witness) will help them with reasons and proof.

*To those who said: Truly, God made a compact with us*
*that we believe not in a Messenger*
*until He approaches with a sacrifice to be consumed by the fire,*
*say: Surely, Messengers brought about to you*
*before me the clear portents and even of what you spoke.*
*Then, why have you killed them*
*if you had been ones who are sincere?* (3:183)

## COMMENTARY°

Muhammad was not the first messenger to be confronted with the charge of falsehood. Many earlier Messengers, especially those sent to the Children of Jacob, were similarly confronted, despite what they had shown of clear evidence and miracles, as well as scrolls containing Divine Commands, described in this sign as books of Divine Wisdom, and with the light-giving revelation, such as the Torah and the Gospel. It is, then, the same story with all Messengers and Divine Messages.

It is the same way they all follow, a way of hardship and sacrifice. It is the only way.

## BOTH PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS HAD ENEMIES

The Quranic signs say clearly that every Prophet and every Messenger had to face enemies. The opposition they faced strengthened their resolve to bring the true message. Only those who are true to their beliefs, dedicated to its causes and seeking no personal gain are guided to success in overcoming their enemies.

The Prophets and Messengers faced enemies with a message of truth in order to correct the corruption that finds its way into a community or human life. Any corruption affects our minds (hearts) while those doing the corruption only serve their own interests. They opposed the Prophets and Messengers in order to defend themselves and their own interests.

*Whoever had been an enemy of God and His angels,*
*and His Messengers and Gabriel and Michael,*
*then, truly, God is an enemy*
*of the ones who are ungrateful.* (2:98)

*And, thus, We assigned for every Prophet*
*an enemy of the ones who sin.*
*And **your** Lord sufficed*
*as one who guides and as a helper.* (25:31)

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHETS AND MESSENGERS

It is important to note that all Messengers are Prophets, but not all Prophets are Messengers because some Messengers are angels and some are human beings. The Quran mentions the names of just some of the Prophets. The Prophets whose names are in bold are also mentioned as human Messengers and as Ones Who Are Sent: Aaron (19:53); **Abraham** (19:41); Adam (); David (17:55); **Elias** (Elijah) (6:85); Elisha (6:85); Enoch (19:56); Ezekiel (Dhul Kifl) "one who remained steadfast" (21:85); Ezra (9:30); **Hud** (Eber) (26:124ff); Isaac (19:49); **Ishmael** (19:54); Jacob (also called Israel) (19:49); **Jesus** (19:30); Job (4:163); **Jonah** (4:163); **Joseph** (6:84); Joshua (Moses' spiritual warrior (*fata*) who accompanied him on his journey to meet Khidr) (18:60-18:65); **Lot** (6:85); **Moses** (19:51); and **Muhammad** (the Seal of the Prophets, his name means "the praised one") (7:158); (**Noah** (19:58); **Salah** (26:142ff); Samuel (nameless) (2:246-2:248); **Jethro** (Shuayb) (26:177ff); Solomon (4:163); Three Nameless "ones who are sent"

(13:36-13:21); Yahya (Yahya (John) means "he lives") (3:39); and Zechariah (whose name means "God has remembered") (6:85). Some commentators such as Ibn Hazm also include Mary as a Prophet.

Four are nameless. One was bestowed to a people for whom Saul was made king (assumed to be Samuel). He said that the Ark of the Covenant will approach the people of this Prophet. In it is tranquility and wisdom from what the people of Moses left and the people of Aaron. Angels will be carrying it: *And their Prophet said to them: Truly, a sign of his dominion is that there would approach you the Ark of the Covenant. In it is tranquility from your Lord, and abiding wisdom of what the people of Moses left, and the people of Aaron. And the angels will carry it. Truly, in that is a sign for you if you had been ones who believe.* (2:246-2:248)

The other three Nameless ones are of a Town, the name of which is not given: And propound a parable for them: *The Companions of the Town when ones who were sent drew near them. When We sent to them two, they denied them both, so We replenished them with the third. And they said: Truly, We are ones who are sent to you. They said: You are nothing but mortals like ourselves and The Merciful caused not to descend anything. You are but lying! They said: Our Lord knows that we are ones who are sent to you. On us is only the delivering of the clear message. They said: Truly, we augured ill of you. If you refrain not yourselves, we will, certainly, stone you. Certainly, a painful punishment will afflict you from us. They said: Ones who auger ill will be with you! Is it because you were reminded? Nay! You are a folk, ones who are excessive. A man drew near from the farther part of the city, coming eagerly. He said: O my folk! Follow the ones who are sent! Follow whoever asks not of you any compensation and they are ones who are truly guided.* (36:13-36:21).

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The following introduces the general characteristics of Prophets and Messengers in the chronological order of the revelation (see chart in Appendix 2).

They glorified God much and remembered God frequently: *Moses said: My Lord! Expand my breast for me.* (20:25).

They were imbued with dynamic energy and insight, sincere, pure, reminders: *And remember Our servants Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob, all imbued with dynamic energy and insight.* (38:45)

They were a mercy from God. *And remember Our servant Job when he cried out to his Lord: Truly, Satan afflicted me with fatigue and punishment!* (38:41)

They have nearness to God and goodness of destination: *Truly, for him* (Solomon) *is nearness with Us, and goodness of destination.* (38:40); God bestowed His mercy and gave them a tongue of lofty sincerity: *And We bestowed on them from Our mercy and We assigned them the tongue of lofty sincerity.* (19:50)

God fulfilled His divine blessings on them: *And, thus, your Lord will elect you and teach you of the interpretation of events. And He will fulfill His divine blessing on you and on the people of Jacob just as He fulfilled it on your two fathers before, Abraham and Isaac. Truly, your Lord is Knowing, Wise.* (12:6)

A leader and mercy: *Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord, and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them? Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates, he is promised the fire! So be you not hesitant about it. Truly, it is The Truth from your Lord, except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17) *And, certainly, We gave Moses the Book, after We caused previous generations to perish as clear evidence for humanity and a guidance and a mercy so that they recollect.* (28:43) *Yet before it was the Book of Moses for a leader and as a mercy. And this is a Book, that which establishes as true in the Arabic language to warn those who did wrong and as good tidings to the ones who are doers of good.* (46:12)

*And, certainly We showed Our grace to Moses and Aaron.* (37:114) Their good name was with the later ones, as well: *Peace be on Elijah!* (37:130)

They were given advantage over the worlds: *And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. We gave all an advantage over the worlds.* (6:86)

God blessed those of their offspring who were doers of good; God guided them and gave recompense to the doers of good: *And We bestowed on him Isaac and Jacob. Each of them We guided. And Noah We guided before and among his offspring are David and Solomon and Job and Joseph and Moses and Aaron. And, thus, We gave recompense to the ones who are doers of good.* (6:84)

They were given an advantage: *And Ishmael and Elisha and Jonah and Lot. We gave all an advantage over the worlds.* (6:86)

They were among the ones in accord with morality: *And Zechariah and Yahya and Jesus and Elijah—all are among the ones in accord with morality.* (6:85) *And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies!* (4:69); guided to a straight path: *And from among their*

*fathers and their offspring and their brothers/sisters, We elected them and We guided them to a straight path.* (6:87)

God caused them to enter into His mercy: *And Ishmael and Enoch and Dhul-Kifl, all were of the ones who remain steadfast.* (21:85)

They were given the criterion, that is, discernment between right and wrong, an illumination and a remembrance for the Godfearing—those who dread their Lord in the unseen, apprehensive about the Hour: *And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion between right and wrong and an illumination and a Remembrance for the ones who are Godfearing, those who dread their Lord in the unseen while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour.* (21:48-21:49)

They were given right judgment: *When he* [Abraham] *said to his father and his folk: What are these images to which you be ones who give yourselves up to?* (21:52) *We left for him a good name with the later ones. Peace be on Elias.* (37:129-37:130)

Some were unexpected gifts to their parents: *And We bestowed Isaac on him and Jacob as an unexpected gift. And We made both of them ones in accord with morality.* (21:72)

They were monotheists: *And they said: Be you ones who are Jews or Christians, you will be truly guided. Say* ***you****: Nay! We follow the creed of Abraham a monotheist. And he had not been of the ones who are polytheists.* (2:135).

They were ones who submitted to God. *Or had you been witnesses when death attended Jacob when he said to his children: How will you worship after me? They said: We will worship* ***your*** *God and the God of* ***your*** *fathers—Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac—One God. And we are ones who submit to Him.* (2:133)

They were given dominion: *Have* ***you*** *not considered him who argued with Abraham about his Lord because God gave him dominion? Mention when Abraham said: My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die. He said: I give life and cause to die. Abraham said: Truly, God brings the sun from the East, so bring* ***you*** *the sun from the West! Then, he who was ungrateful was dumfounded. And God guides not the unjust folk.* (2:258)

God tested them with words and they fulfilled them, leaders for humanity: *And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words; then, he fulfilled them. God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes* ***you*** *a leader for humanity. He said: And of my offspring? He said: The ones who are unjust attain not My compact.* (2:124)

He gave tenderness and mercy to the hearts of those who follow them: *Again, We sent Our Messengers following their footsteps. And We*

*sent following them Jesus son of Mary. And We gave him the Gospel. And We assigned in the hearts of those who followed him, tenderness and mercy. But as for monasticism, they made it up themselves. We prescribed it not for them but they were so looking for the contentment of God. Then, they gave it not the attention giving its right attention so We gave those who believed among them their compensation. And many of them are ones who disobey.* (57:27) Muhammad is the *Seal of the Prophets.* (33:40)

The Messengers were sent with the signs of God and with a clear authority; given grace, they were delivered from great distress; God helped them so they became victors; they were given the Manifest Book, guided to a straight path, left with a good name, sympathetic and forbearing: *And had not been Abraham asking for forgiveness for his father only because of a promise he had promised him? Then, when it became clear to him that, truly, he was an enemy to God, he cleared himself from him. Truly, Abraham was sympathetic and forbearing.* (9:114)

## CRITICAL THINKING•

### LISTENING CRITICALLY: THE ART OF SILENT DIALOGUE

**Principle•**

Critical thinkers know that listening can either be done passively and uncritically or actively and critically. This is the case whether students are listening to the Quran in a language they understand or listening to their teacher's lesson. They know that it is not easy to understand what the Quranic text or another person is saying and then to integrate those thoughts into their own.

When we compare speaking and listening, we know that when we speak, we hold on to our own ideas. We are able to arrange them in some order. We express our thoughts with which we are familiar.

Listening to another, however is more difficult. In listening, students have to take the words they are hearing and translate them into our own words and ideas for them to make sense. They have not experienced the same things as the speaker. It is difficult to anticipate where the speaker's words are taking them. They have to be attentive to what the other person is saying.

## SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

In Segment 1 we learn of the commonalities between the Prophets and Messengers. Some were given advantage over some others; God has sent both Prophets and Messengers; we are not to divide and separate among them; both are servants of God; both are commanded to obey God; God firms the minds of the Prophets by relating about the Messengers to them; among both of them were those who were unrightfully killed; both of them had enemies.

Prophets and Messengers:

- glorify God much and remembered God frequently

- had dynamic energy and insight, were sincere, pure, reminders
- were near to God and had goodness of destination
- are a leader and mercy
- were given the Book, critical judgment and prophethood
- had a good name was with the later ones, as well
- were given advantage over the worlds
- were given an advantage
- were among the ones in accord with morality
- were given the criterion: discernment between right and wrong
- were given an illumination
- were a remembrance for the Godfearing—those who dread their Lord in the unseen and are apprehensive about the Hour
- were given right judgment
- were unexpected gifts to their parents
- compensation was given in the present and in the world to come
- were monotheists
- were ones who submitted to God
- were given dominion
- God caused them to enter into His mercy.
- God guided them and gave recompense to the doers of good.
- God blessed those of their offspring who were doers of good .
- God fulfilled His divine blessings on them.
- God tested them with words and they fulfilled them, leaders for humanity.
- God gave tenderness and mercy to the hearts of those who follow them.
- Muhammad is the *Seal of the Prophets.*

All of this requires active listening. Developing into an active listener requires time and practice. It also requires asking key questions. Practice questions are such as:

**QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•**

I'm not sure I understand you when you say ...,
Could you explain that further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of this?
Would you also say ...?
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is .... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection?

Critical listeners ask questions as they listen in order to better understand what the speaker is saying.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•**

Why does an ungrateful person say this?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?

What is the main point?
How does this detail relate to the main point?
Is the ungrateful using this concept as I would, or somewhat differently?

**Application•**

Critical thinking is best taught by a teachers who model it, who themselves are active listeners who show students the patience and skill required. Being patient as students learn means taking them seriously as they try to express their thoughts by asking them relevant questions.

*We will cause them to see Our signs on the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is The Truth.* (41:53)

**QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•**

What did you understand from the Quranic signs in this segment?
So-and-so, did you follow what your classmate said?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or: So-and-so, could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Do you recall when seeing an outward sign reflected a sign within yourself?

It often happens that students do not understand an assignment. It is an opportunity for teachers to make their assignment an example of critical listening.

*Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord, and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them? Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates, he is promised the fire! So be **you** not hesitant about it. Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord, except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17)

**QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•**

Is the Quranic purpose clear? Write a paragraph, or do a research project, or give an oral report, about the purpose as you understand it?
Is the purpose significant or trivial or somewhere in between?
Is the Quranic purpose realistic?
Is it an achievable purpose?
Does the overall goal change, or is it consistent?
Does it have contradictory purposes?

*And whoever obeys God and the Messenger, those are to whom God was gracious among the Prophets and just persons and the witnesses and the ones in accord with morality. And excellent were those as allies!* (4:69)

**QUESTIONS FOR A CLASS DISCUSSION•**

So-and-so, did you listen to your classmate's summary?
Could you put what she said in your own words?
Or we can say: Could you give us an example from your own experience of what your classmate has said?
Has anything like that ever happened to you?

*And, certainly, We gave Moses and Aaron the Criterion between right and wrong and an illumination and a Remembrance for the ones who are Godfearing, those who dread their Lord in the unseen while they are ones who are apprehensive of the Hour.* (21:48-21:49)

**QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•**

What is the Quran's fundamental purpose in revealing these signs?
Are there multiple points of view?
What do you mean by?
What is your main point?

*Truly, those who are ungrateful to God and His Messengers and they want to separate and divide between God and His Messenger and they say: We believe in some and we disbelieve in others, they want that they take themselves to a way between that.* (4:150)

**QUESTIONS FOR A CLASS DISCUSSION•**

I'm not sure I understand you when you explained the Quranic signs.
Could you explain it further?
Could you give me an example or illustration of the signs?
Would you also say ...?'
Let me see if I understand you. What you are saying is... Is that right?
How do you respond to this objection? Why does she say that?
What examples could I give to illustrate that point?
What is the main point? How does this detail relate to the main point?
That one? Is he using this word as I would, or somewhat differently?

These highly skilled and activated processes are crucial to learning.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I understood the purpose of the Prophets and Messengers in the revelation of these signs.

I understood the goal of learning according to these Quranic signs.
I understood the purpose of the signs saying that we should not
divide and separate between the Prophets and Messengers..

## SEGMENT 2: PROPHETS

In this segment we look at the Quranic signs describing various aspects of the Prophets. What are some of their important specific characteristics such as: Prophethood and what it means; some of their characteristics and duties; the promise they made in their covenant with God to believe in the Messengers. How are they to give judgment? What is their role on the Day of Judgment?

Now we turn to Prophets and a look at some of their characteristics in more detail.

### SPECIFIC QURANIC CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPHETHOOD

*Those are those to whom We gave the Book*
*and critical judgment*
*and prophethood.*
*So if these are ungrateful for them,*
*then, surely, We charged a folk with them*
*who is not of the ones who are ungrateful for them.* (6:89)

Prophets have been given God's message for humanity. They then spoke of its implementation. Those who deny God's message, do not hurt God, but only themselves. The sign reassures believers that they and their community are not alone or isolated. They are part of a branch of a larger tree with its roots and branches reaching vertically to the heavens. They are part of a continuous movement of monotheism that began with Adam and that will continue until the Day of Judgment.

*It had not been for a mortal that God should give him the Book*
*and critical judgment and the prophethood and, again,*
*he say to humanity: Be you servants of me instead of God!*
*Rather, he would say: Be you masters,*
*because you had been teaching the Book*
*and because you had been studying it.* (3:79)

*And, certainly, We gave the Children of Jacob the Book,*
*the critical judgment and the prophethood*
*and We provided them from what is good*
*and We gave them advantage over the worlds.* (45:16)

*And We bestowed Isaac and Jacob on him*
*and We assigned to his offspring prophethood and the Book.*

*We gave him his compensation in the present.*
*And, truly, in the world to come he will be, certainly,*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (29:27)

*And how many a Prophet whom, along with him, many thousands*
*fought, but none lost confidence with what lit on them in the way of*
*God, nor were they weakened nor were they to give in.*
*And God loves the ones who remain steadfast.* (3:146)

This sign (3:146) does not refer to any specific Prophet who fought, never lost confidence or weakened, giving in. Committing ourselves to a Prophet will mean facing many trials as we tie a relationship with others who follow the same beliefs. Humanity learns that the cause of their belief has been present throughout history.

*It had not been for a Prophet that he defraud.*
*And whoever defrauds, what he defrauded*
*will approach him on the Day of Resurrection.*
*Again, the account will be paid in full of every soul*
*for what he earned and they will not be wronged.* (3:161)

COMMENTARY°

This sign refers again to the moral qualities associated with the Prophet, in order to stress the importance of honesty and to forbid deceit and cheating. It reminds people that they will have to account for their deeds and that everyone will be given his fair reward.

Another characteristic of the Prophets is that they teach moral qualities that they themselves practice. They stress the importance of honesty and forbid cheating and deceit. All deeds will be accounted for and everyone will be judged fairly.

## SOME OF THE DUTIES OF PROPHETS

*Humanity had been of one community. Then, God raised up the*
*Prophets, ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.*
*And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth*
*to give judgment among humanity about what*
*they were at variance in it. None were at variance in it*
*but those who were given it after the clear portents drew near them*
*because of their insolence to one another.*
*Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth*
*—about what they were at variance in it— with His permission.*
*And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (2:213)

What the Quran states here is the definitive [monotheistic] view of the origin and development of religion and religious ideology in the world. Briefly stated, this says that every Prophet came with teachings based on the fundamental principle of God's absolute Oneness. Inevitably, after some time, deviations and myths crept in, causing people to depart from the original authentic traditions and teachings, thereby precipitating the need for a new Prophet and a new set of teachings to revive and restore the preceding one, taking into account the mental, cultural and material developments and changes society had undergone and the new conditions prevailing.

## PROPHETS GAVE A SOLEMN PROMISE TO BELIEVE IN THE MESSENGERS

*Mention when We took a solemn promise from the Prophets*
*and from you [Muhammad] and from Noah and Abraham and*
*Moses and Jesus son of Mary.*
*We took an earnest solemn promise from them.* (33:7)

The link between the Prophets and the Message is based on the solemn promise or covenant that the Prophets made with God. The covenant states that if a Prophet is followed by a Messenger who confirms his own message, the Prophet is required to state his belief in the Messenger, support him and follow his faith no matter what Book was given the Prophet when he was given prophethood and critical judgment. God has made this binding agreement with every Prophet and Messenger He sent. This covenant committed Prophets to deliver God's Message. God's Message contained His code for human life. Prophets implemented and advocated it to their respective communities.

As this has been done, people are now responsible for their own attitude toward divine guidance and for their belief or disbelief. They are each accountable for their own "self" without being able to justify or offer excuses to themselves as to why they do not follow divine guidance. Each Prophet took the pledge to receive God's revelations, deliver the message and establish His code, being faithful to what God had entrusted to him.

## PROPHETS ARE TO GIVE JUDGMENT BY WHAT IS SENT

*Truly, We caused the Torah to descend*
*wherein is guidance and light.*
*The Prophets give judgment with it, those who submitted to God,*

*for those who became Jews and the rabbis and*
*learned Jewish scholars who committed to memory the Book of God*
*and they had been witnesses to it.*
*So dread not humanity, but dread Me.*
*And exchange not My signs for a little price.*
*And whoever gives not judgment by what God caused to descend,*
*those, they are the ones who are ungrateful.* (5:44)

Every divinely revealed religion is meant to be a way of life. It is meant for the followers of that faith to take the leadership of humanity, organize it and protect it. Therefore, every divine revelation has been revealed as a way of life. The size of the community to which it is directed is not important.

This Quranic sign (5:44) refers to the Torah. It is revealed as a guidance and light not only for the minds (hearts) and consciences as a system of belief and the rituals that it provides, but in order to be a guidance and light, it has to have a code of law that regulates practical, everyday life and protects by the system that God provides.

### THE ROLE OF PROPHETS ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

*And the earth will shine with the Light of its Lord*
*and the Book will be laid down*
*and the Prophets and the witnesses will be brought about.*
*And it will be decided among them with The Truth.*
*And they, they will not be wronged.* (39:69)

Prophets will bear witness on the Day of Judgment along with the witness-angels. All will be judged with fairness and no one will be wronged.

## CRITICAL THINKING•

### RAISE QUESTIONS, PROBLEMS, ISSUES (REFLECT)

The Quranic text asks hundreds of questions in reasoning something out. There are many issues that end with a question, many rhetorical, the answer to which the Quranic message itself implies. One of the best ways to become critical thinkers is to understand how the Quran raises questions.

In addition to understanding how to raise questions, four strategies have been included in this part that are specific to raising questions. As previously stated above with the element of purpose, each strategy has a principle and an application along with Quranic examples and questions for the students and classroom discussion.

Assessing skills of mastery of raising questions test the ability of students:

**HOW TO RAISE QUESTIONS•**

Formulate a question in a clear and relevant way
Choose from among alternative expressions
Discuss the advantages of different types of the question at issue
Recognize key common elements in statements of different questions
Structure the articulation of problems so as to make a possible solution more apparent.

*Humanity had been of one community. Then, God raised up the Prophets, ones who give good tidings and ones who warn. And with them He caused the Book to descend with The Truth to give judgment among humanity about what they were at variance in it. None were at variance in it but those who were given it after the clear portents drew near them because of their insolence to one another. Then, God guided those who believed to The Truth—about what they were at variance in it— with His permission. And God guides whom He wills to a straight path.* (2:213)

**STUDENTS ASK THEMSELVES**

What is the key question in this Quranic message?
How does the Quranic message reply to its own question?
Details are very important. Who are ones who deny this way of life?

Critical thinkers learn to be skilled at analyzing questions to determine what, precisely, it is asking and how to go about rationally responding to it.

*And mention when his Lord tested Abraham with words; then, he fulfilled them. God said: Truly, I am One Who Makes you a leader for humanity. He said: And of my offspring? He said: The ones who are unjust attain not My compact.* (2:124)

**REMINDER TO STUDENTS REGARDING QUESTIONING THE ABOVE SIGN•**

What are the questions we are asked?
What are the questions we are not asked?
What questions did you ask?
Should you have asked?

## SEGMENT 3: MESSENGERS

### NOT ALL MESSENGERS MENTIONED IN THE QURAN

*And Messengers We related to you* (Muhammad) *before*
*and Messengers We relate to you not* (4:164)

*And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you*
*among whom We related to you*
*and of whom We relate not to you.* (40:78)
*****

We turn now to Messengers who are two types as described in the Quranic signs: Angel Messenger and Human Messengers. We begin looking at Angel Messenger who they are, how they are described, what their duties are: Drawing near with the truth; bringing good tidings and warning of impending danger and then what Angel Messenger Angels.

### ANGEL MESSENGERS

The Arabic word for Angel Messengers is the same word that is used for Human Messengers (*rusul*). It depends upon the context whether the Quranic signs are referring to an angel or a human being.

*God favors from the angels, messengers....* (22:75)

*Say: If there had been angels on earth walking around,*
*ones who are at peace, then, We would certainly have sent down*
*for them from heaven an angel as a Messenger.* (17:95)

God might have willed to have angels inhabit the earth. He could have made them in the form of human beings. However, He willed to set laws of nature into operation and made His creatures able to live according to the laws of nature, laws He has made permanent and unalterable. His purpose for creation is fulfilled through the operation of His laws of nature.

#### COMMENTARY°

Believing in angels is a component of Islamic faith which requires every Muslim to believe in God, His angels, books, messengers, the Last Day and destiny, believe in an imperceptible world represents a great departure in man's life, helping him to break out of his limited and narrow physical existence and to perceive the existence of a world beyond.

The Quran tells us about some of the qualities and attributes of the angels. These are sufficient for us to formulate a proper concept of them and of our relationship with them. They are a species of God's creation who submit themselves totally to God and who obey Him all the time without hesitation. They are near to God although we do not know what sort of proximity is meant here: *And they said: The Merciful took to Himself a son. Glory be to Him! Nay! Honored servants! They precede Him not in saying and they act by His command. He knows what is in advance of them and what is behind them and they intercede not but for him with whom He was content. And they are dreading Him, ones who are apprehensive.* (21:26-21:28) *And to Him belongs whoever is in the heavens and the earth. And whoever is near Him, they grow not arrogant to worship Him, nor they be weary. They glorify Him nighttime and daytime. They never decrease.* (21:19-21:20)

They carry God's Throne and surround it on the Day of Judgement. We do not know how this happens, because we only know what God has revealed to us of the world beyond: *Those who carry the Throne and whoever is around it glorify the praises of their Lord and believe in Him.* (40:7) *And you will see the angels as ones who encircle around the Throne glorifying their Lord with praise. And it would be decided in Truth among them.* (39:75)

They provide the keepers of the heavens and hell, receive the inhabitants of the first with greetings and prayer, while they receive those bound to hell with reproach and warnings of great suffering. *Those who were ungrateful will be ones driven to hell in troops until when they drew near it, then, the doors of it will be flung open. Ones who are its keepers will say to them: Approach not Messengers from among you who recount to you the signs of your Lord to warn you of the meeting of this your Day? They would say: Yea. But the word of punishment was realized against the ones who are ungrateful. It will be said: Enter the doors of hell as ones who will dwell in it forever. Miserable it will be as a place of lodging for the ones who increase in pride. Those who were Godfearing will be ones driven to their Lord in the Garden in troops until when they drew near it and its doors were let loose, ones who are its keepers will say to them: Peace be on you! You fared well! So enter it, ones who dwell in it forever.* (39:71-39:73) *We assigned none but angels to be wardens of the Fire.* (74:31)

The angels deal with people on earth in various ways. They watch over them by God's decree and they follow their deeds and keep a record of everything that human beings do or say. They also cause them to die when their time is over: *And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants. And He sends over you recorders until when death drew near one of you. Our messengers gathered him to them-*

*selves and they neglect not.* (6:61) *For him there are Ones Who Postpone from before him and from behind him to keep him safe by the command of God.* (13:11) *When the two receivers are ones who receive, seated on the right and on the left, he utters not a saying but that there is one ready, watching over near him.* (50:17-50:18)

Angels also deliver God's revelations to His messengers. God has also informed us that Gabriel is the one chosen among them to fulfil this task: *He sends down the angels with the Spirit of His command on whom He wills of His servants to warn that there is no god but I, so be Godfearing of Me.* (16:2) *Say: Whoever had been an enemy of Gabriel knows then, truly, it was sent down through him to your hear with the permission of God, that which establishes as true what was before it, and as a guidance and good tidings for the ones who believe.* (2:97) God describes Gabriel as one who has been endowed with power. He confirms that His Messenger, Muhammad, has seen Gabriel in his angelic form twice, while he has seen him in various shapes and forms when he gave him other revelations: *By the star when it hurled to ruin, neither your companion went astray, nor he erred nor speaks he for himself out of desire. It is but a revelation that is revealed, taught to him by The One Stronger in Strength, Possessor of Forcefulness. Then, he stood poised while he was on the loftiest horizon. Again, he came to pass near and hung suspended until he had been at a distance of two bow lengths or closer. Then, He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The mind lied not against what it saw. Will you altercate with him about what he sees? And, certainly, he saw it another time near the Lote Tree of the Utmost Boundary near which is the Garden of the Place of Shelter,* (53:1-53:15)

The angels also join the believers giving them support and help, steadying their feet in their great, unabating battle against evil and tyranny. They busy themselves with what happens to the believers. They glorify their Lord, pray to Him to forgive the sins of those who believe in Him. In their supplication for the believers, which is mentioned in the Quran, they appear to be so caring, kind and loving. They also give the believers, at the time of their death, the happy news that they are going to heaven. When they arrive in the next world, they also give them their happy news and greet them in heaven.

On the other hand, they receive the ungrateful in hell with reproach and warning of their impending suffering. They may also fight against them in the battle that rages on between truth and falsehood. When they die, they pluck out their souls in a manner which afflicts and humiliates the ungrateful.

## THE MESSENGER ANGEL IS A GENEROUS MESSENGER

*Truly, the Quran is a saying from a generous Messenger.* (81:19)

This is the first that the early Muslims hear of a Messenger Angel. The generous Messenger is Gabriel.

*By ones who are sent successively.* (77:1)

### COMMENTARY°

God swears by the many angels who are sent one after another. It is also said that these are the angels who are sent with the good, i.e. Gabriel, Michael and Seraphiel. (72:27)

*The Praise belongs to God, One Who is the Originator*
*of the heavens and the earth, the One Who Makes*
*the angels Messengers imbued with wings*
*by twos and in threes and fours.*
*He increases in creation what He wills.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (35:1)

### COMMENTARY°

According to commentators, the wings refer to God's will that is continuously manifested throughout the universe through the laws of nature, here described as on the wings of angels.

## THE MESSENGER ANGELS DUTIES DESCRIBED

### RECORD THE DEEDS OF HUMANITY

*And when We caused humanity to experience mercy*
*after tribulation afflicted them,*
*that is when they conspired against Our signs.*
*Say: God is Swifter in planning.*
*Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan.* (10:21)

*And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants.*
*And He sends over you recorders until*
*when death drew near one of you.*
*Our messengers gathered him to themselves*
*and they neglect not.* (6:61)

### COMMENTARY°

This balance or standard bestowed by God is the only guarantee of safety for humanity in the midst of tempests, earthquakes and other turmoil that overwhelms it as it finds itself in the middle of an ocean

of conflicting desires and sentiments, competition and selfishness. Hence it is imperative that people should have an accurately balanced and steady standard that points them to the truth, justice and fairness with no favoritism whatsoever. The purpose of this balance, then, is *that humanity may uphold justice.*

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts*
*and their conspiring secretly?*
*Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

*Certainly, We sent Our Messengers with the clear portents*
*and We caused the Book to descend with them and the Balance*
*so that humanity may uphold equity....* (57:25)

### DRAW NEAR WITH THE TRUTH

*And they will say: The Praise belongs to God*
*Who truly guided us to this!*
*And we would not have been guided if God guided us not.*
*Certainly, the Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth.*
*And it was proclaimed to them that this,*
*the Garden, was given to you as inheritance*
*for what you had been doing.* (7:43)

*Did they look on for nothing but its interpretation?*
*The Day its interpretation approaches,*
*those who forgot it before will say:*
*Surely, Messengers of our Lord drew near us with The Truth.*
*Have we any intercessors who will intercede for us?*
*Or will we be returned so we do*
*other than what we had been doing before?*
*Surely, they lost themselves.*
*Went astray from them what they had been devising.* (7:53)

### ANGEL MESSENGERS BRING GOOD TIDINGS

*And, certainly, Our messengers*
*drew near Abraham with good tidings.*
*They said: Peace.*
*He said: Peace.*
*And he presently brought about a roasted calf.* (11:69)

### ANGEL MESSENGERS WARN OF IMPENDING DANGER

*They said: O Lot! Truly, we are Messengers of your Lord.*
*They will not reach out to you*
*so set you forth with your people in a part of the night*
*and let not any of you look back, but your woman.*
*Truly, that which lights on them will light on her.*
*Truly, what is promised to them is in the morning.*
*Is the morning not near?* (11:81)

## COMMENTARY°

They said, '... *but your woman*': as her being an exception among his 'family.' In other words: Do not take her along when you travel, lo! she shall be smitten by that which smites them. It is said that he did not take her along with him. It is also said that she did set out with them and turned round, and so exclaimed: 'Woe is my people!', at which point a stone struck her and killed her. When he, Lot, asked them about the time of their destruction, the Angel Messengers replied: *Truly what is promised to them is in the morning.* When Lot said, 'I want it to be sooner', they said: *Is the morning not near?'*

### ANGEL MESSENGERS ASK QUESTIONS

*Then, who does greater wrong than he who devised a lie*
*against God or denied His signs?*
*Those, they will attain their share from the Book.*
*When Our Messengers drew near to gather them to themselves,*
*they [messenger angels] will say:*
*Where are who you had been calling on other than God?*
*They [the ungrateful] will say: They went astray from us.*
*And they bore witness against themselves that,*
*truly, they had been ones who are ungrateful.* (7:37)

*And when We caused humanity to experience mercy*
*after tribulation afflicted them,*
*that is when they conspired against Our signs.*
*Say: God is Swifter in planning.*
*Truly, Our messengers write down what you plan.* (10:21)

*And He is The One Who Is Omniscient over His servants.*
*And He sends over you recorders until*
*when death drew near one of you.*
*Our messengers gathered him to themselves*
*and they neglect not.* (6:61)

*Assume they that We hear not their secret thoughts*
*and their conspiring secretly?*
*Yea! Our messengers are near them writing down.* (43:80)

*The Praise belongs to God,*
*One Who is the Originator of the heavens and the earth,*
*the One Who Makes the Angel Messengers*
*imbued with wings by twos and in threes and fours.*
*He increases in creation what He wills.*
*Truly, God is Powerful over everything.* (35:1)

## Human Messengers

### General Characteristics of Human Messengers

What are their duties? Why were Messengers denied, maligned and ridiculed? What is their role with those who are ungrateful to God? What do Messengers say?

Messengers are they who bear witness: *Truly, We sent you a Messenger, one who bears witness to you.* (73:15)

There is no fallacy in them: *He said: O my folk! There is no fallacy in me. I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:61)

There is no foolishness in them: He said: *O my folk! There is no foolishness in me. I am only a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:67)

They say nothing but the truth: *And Moses said: O Pharaoh! Truly, I am a Messenger from the Lord of the worlds.* (7:104) *Messenger(s) command to what is moral and prohibit that which is immoral; permit what is good and forbid deeds of corruption; they remove severe tests from them and yokes: those who follow the Messenger—the unlettered Prophet—whom they will find with them that which is a writing in the Torah and the Gospel. He commands them to that which is honorable and prohibits them from that which is unlawful. And He permits to them what is good and forbids them from deeds of corruption. And He lays down for them severe tests, and the yokes that had been on them. So those who believed in him and supported him and helped him and followed the light that was caused to descend to him, those, they are the ones who prosper.* (7:157)

They are devoted: *And remember Moses in the Book. Truly, he had been one who was devoted and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet* (19:51).

They are sincere in their promise: *And remember Ishmael in the Book. Truly, he had been one who is sincere in his promise, and he had been a Messenger, a Prophet* (19:54).

They eat food and walk in the market: *And they said: What Messen-*

*ger is this that he eats food and walks in the markets? Why was an angel not caused to descend to him to be a warner with him?* (25:7)

They are Messenger(s) of the Lord of the worlds: *And both of you approach Pharaoh and say: We are the Messengers of the Lord of the worlds,* (26:16) *And, certainly, We sent Moses with Our signs to Pharaoh and his Council. So he said: Truly, I am a Messenger of the Lord of the worlds.* (43:46); trustworthy: *Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you* (26:107); *truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you.* (26:125)

Messenger(s) deliver messages from God: *Unless I be delivering messages from God, His messages. And whoever disobeys God and His Messenger, then, for him is the fire of hell, ones who will dwell in it forever, eternally.* (72:23)

God is content with them: *But a Messenger with whom He was content.* (72:27) They recount God's signs: *Thy Lord had not been One Who Causes towns to perish until He raises up to their mother-town a Messenger who recounts Our signs to them. We never had been Ones Who Cause towns to perish unless their people are ones who are unjust.* (28:59)

They come with clear portents: *And, certainly, Joseph drew near you before with the clear portents, but you ceased not in uncertainty as to what he brought about to you. Until when he perished you said: God will never raise up a Messenger after him. Thus, God causes him to go astray, one who is excessive, one who is a doubter* (40:34).

They bring the signs with the permission of God: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before* ***you*** *among whom We related to* ***you*** *and of whom We relate not to* ***you****. And it had not been for any Messenger that he bring a sign, except with the permission of God. So when the command of God drew near, the matter would be decided rightfully. And lost here are these, the ones who deal in falsehood.* (40:78)

They reveal by God's permission what God wills: *And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him, but by revelation or from behind a partition or that He send a Messenger to reveal by His permission what He wills. Truly, He is Lofty, Wise.* (42:51)

They are mortal: *And nothing prevented humanity from believing when the guidance drew near them, but that they said: Raised God up a mortal as a Messenger?* (17:94)

It is revealed to them that there is no god but God so worship God: *And We sent not before* ***you*** *any Messenger, but We reveal to him that there is no god but I, so worship Me.* (21:25)

Human Messenger(s) are monotheists who are given the Book, clear portents, and Jesus confirmed with the hallowed spirit: *And, certainly,*

*We gave Moses the Book and We sent Messengers following after him. And We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear portents, and confirmed him with the hallowed Spirit. Is it that whenever a Messenger drew near you with what you yourselves yearn not for, you grew arrogant, and you denied a group of people, and you kill a group of people?* (2:87)

They recount God's signs, teach the Book and wisdom and purify those who follow them: *Our Lord! And raise **You** up, then, in the midst of them, a Messenger from among them who will recount to them **Your** signs and teach them the Book, and wisdom and make them pure. Truly, **You**, **You** alone are The Almighty, The Wise.* (2:129)

They are a witness to humanity: *And, thus, We made you a middle community that you be witnesses to humanity, and that the Messenger be a witness to you.* (2:143)

Messenger(s) teaches us what we know not: *We sent to you a Messenger from among you who recounts Our signs to you, and makes you pure, and teaches you the Book and wisdom, and teaches you what you be knowing not.* (2:151)

They ask for God's help and say: God's help is near: *Or assumed you that you would enter the Garden while approaches you not the likeness of those who passed away before you? Desolation and tribulation afflicted them. And they are so convulsed that even the Messenger says, and those who believed with him: When will there be help from God? No doubt, truly, the help of God is Near.* (2:214)

Whoever does not forsake usury there will be war from God and His Messenger: *But if you accomplish it not, then, give ear to war from God and His Messenger. And if you repented, you will have your principal capital, doing no wrong to others nor will you be wronged.* (2:279)

Messengers believe in what is sent forth to them; believe in God, His angels, His Books and His other Messengers and separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers: and they believe in what was sent forth to them from their Lord: *The Messenger believed in what was caused to descend to him from his Lord as do the ones who believe. All believed in God and His angels and His Books and His Messengers saying: We separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers. And they said: We heard and we obeyed, so grant Thy forgiveness, Our Lord! And to **You** is the Homecoming.* (2:285) God sends Messenger(s) to be obeyed: *Say: Obey God and the Messenger. Then, if they turned away, then, truly, God loves not the ones who are ungrateful.* (3:32)

Jesus was a Messenger to the Children of Jacob. He had been taught the Book, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel. He drew near with a sign

from the Lord; created the likeness of a bird from clay; breathed into it and it became a bird with God's permission; cured one who was blind from birth and the leper; gave life to dead mortals with the permission of God; told the people of his time what they eat and what they store up in their houses; established as true what was before him of the Torah and permitted some of what had been forbidden to the people before; and drew near with a sign from the Lord: *To be a Messenger to the Children of Jacob saying: Surely I drew near you with a sign from your Lord that I will create for you out of clay a likeness of a bird. Then, I breathe into it and it will become a bird with the permission of God. And I cure one who is blind from birth and the leper and give life to dead mortals with the permission of God. And I tell you what you eat and what you store up in your houses. Truly, in that is a sign for you if you had been ones who believe.* (3:49)

Prophets made a solemn promise to follow a Messenger who drew near to them with that which establishes as true what is with him, will believe in him and will help him: *And mention when God took a solemn promise from the Prophets: Whatever I gave you of the Book and wisdom, again, if a Messenger drew near you with that which establishes as true what is with you, you will believe in him and you will help him. He said: Are you in accord? And will you take on My severe test? They said: We are in accord. He said: Then, bear witness and I am with you among the ones who bear witness.* (3:81)

Messenger(s) bring clear portents: *How will God guide a folk who disbelieved after their belief? And they bore witness to The Truth of the Messenger after the clear portents drew near them. And God guides not the unjust folk.* (3:86)

They bring mercy if one believes in them: *And obey God and the Messenger so that perhaps you will find mercy.* (3:132)

Messenger(s) pass away: *And Muhammad is only a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. Then, if he died or be slain, will you turn about on your heels? And he who turns about on his heels will not injure God at all. And God will give recompense to the ones who are thankful.* (3:144)

They receive grace from God; they recite the signs, purify those who follow them, teach them the Book and wisdom: *Certainly, God showed grace to the ones who believe when he raised up among them a Messenger from themselves who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom. And, truly, before that they had been, certainly, clearly wandering astray.* (3:164)

Messengers have authority; if people contend with one another, they should refer it to God and the Messenger: *O those who believed! Obey God and obey the Messenger and those imbued with authority among you. Then, if you contended with one another in anything, refer it to God and the Messenger if you had been believing in God and the Last Day. That is better and a fairer interpretation.* (4:59) Messenger(s) ask for forgiveness for those who repent: *And We never sent a Messenger, but he is obeyed with the permission of God. And if, when they did wrong themselves, they drew near to you and asked for the forgiveness of God and the Messenger asked for forgiveness for them, they found God Accepter of Repentance, Compassionate. (4:64) They are given this Book and the Books sent before.* (4:136)

They draw near with the Truth: *O humanity! Surely, the Messenger drew near you with The Truth from your Lord. So believe, it is better for you. And if you are ungrateful, then, truly, to God is whatever is in the heavens and the earth. And God had been Knowing, Wise.* (4:170)

They receive a part of the spoils of war: *And what God gave as spoils of war to His Messenger from them, you spurred not an animal for an expedition, neither any horse nor riding camel but God gives authority to His Messengers over whomever He wills. And God is Powerful over everything.* (59:6)

Some have been driven out: *O those who believed! Take not My enemies to yourselves and your enemies as protectors, giving a proposal of affection towards them while they were ungrateful for what drew near you of The Truth. They drive out the Messenger and you because you believe in God, your Lord. If you had been going forth struggling in My way and looking for My goodwill, you keep secret affection for them. Yet I am greater in knowledge of what you concealed and what you spoke openly. And whoever accomplishes that among you, surely, he went astray from the right path.* (60:1)

They are good, fair examples: *Surely, in the Messenger of God there is for you a fairer, good example for those whose hope had been in God and the Last Day and remembered God frequently.* (33:21)

They are sincere: *When the ones who believe saw the confederates, they said: This is what God and His Messenger promised us and God and His Messenger were sincere. And it increased them not but in belief and to resign themselves to submission to God.* (33:22)

They are given spouses and offspring: *And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you and We assigned for them spouses and offspring. And it had not been for a Messenger to bring a sign but with the permission of God. For every term there is a Book.* (13:38)

They give judgment against ones who believe not: *And when they were called to God and His Messenger to give judgment among them, then, a group of people among them are ones who turn aside.* (24:48)
They give permission to those who ask for permission: *The ones who believe are only those who believe in God and His Messenger. And when they had been with him on a collective matter, they go not until they asked his permission. Truly, those who ask **your** permission, those are those who believed in God and His Messenger. So when they ask **your** permission for some of their affairs, give permission to whom **you** had willed of them, and ask God for forgiveness for them. Truly, God is Forgiving, Compassionate.* (24:62).

They supplicate: *The supplication of the Messenger among you is not as the supplication of some of you on some other. Surely, God knows those who slip away under cover. And let those who go against his command beware so that a test should not light on them or a painful punishment not light on them.* (24:63).

They recount the signs of God, ones that are made manifest to bring out those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality from the shadows to the light: *A Messenger who recounts to you the signs of God, ones that are made manifest, that he brings out those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality from the shadows to the light. And whoever believes in God and does as one in accord with morality, He will cause him to enter into Gardens beneath which rivers run, ones who will dwell in them forever, eternally. Surely, God did good with provision for him.* (65:11).

They recount the purified scrolls wherein are truth-loving Books: *A Messenger from God, who recounts to them purified scrolls.* (98:2)
They fantasize, but God nullifies what Satan casts: *And We sent not before thee any Messenger nor Prophet, but when he fantasized, Satan cast fantasies into him. But God nullifies what Satan casts. Again, God set clear His signs. And God is Knowing, Wise.* (22:52) They are a witness against us and we against humanity: *And struggle for God in a true struggling. He elected you and made not for you in your way of life any impediment. It is the creed of your father Abraham. He named you the ones who submit to God before and in this Recitation that the Messenger be a witness over you and you are witnesses over humanity. So perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and cleave firmly to God. He is your Defender. How excellent a Defender and how excellent a Helper!* (22:78)

They ask for forgiveness of others: *And when it was said to them: Approach now. The Messenger of God asks forgiveness for you. They*

*twist their heads and you had seen them dissuading while they are ones who grow arrogant* (63:5).

They are a light sent forth from God: *So believe in God and His Messenger, and in the Light which We caused to descend. And God is Aware of what you do.* (64:8)

They had torment inflicted on them: *And when Moses said to his folk: O my folk! Why malign me while, surely, you know that I am the Messenger of God to you? So when they swerved, God caused their hearts to swerve. And God guides not the folk, the ones who disobey.* (61:5)

The Messenger Jesus established as true what was in advance of him in the Torah and gives good tidings of one to approach after him: *And when Jesus son of Mary said: O Children of Israel! I am the Messenger of God to you, one who establishes as true what was in advance of me in the Torah and one who gives good tidings of a Messenger to approach after me. His name will be Ahmad. But when he brought about the clear portents to them, they said: This is clear sorcery!* (61:6)

They are sent with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth to uplift it over all other ways of life even though the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (61:9) Messenger(s) are given tranquility and fastened with the Word of God-consciousness: *Mention when those who were ungrateful laid zealotry in their hearts, like the zealotry of the Age of Ignorance. Then, God caused to descend His tranquility on His Messenger and on the ones who believe and fastened on them the Word of God-consciousness. They had been with right to it and were more worthy of it. And God had been Knowing.* (48:26)

They are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth that God may uplift over all of the ways of life: *He it is Who sent His Messenger with guidance and the way of life of The Truth that He uplift it over all of the ways of life. And God sufficed as a witness.* (48:28)

Some are unlettered, from among the people; they recount God's signs to them, purify and teach the Book and wisdom: *He it is Who raised up among the unlettered a Messenger from among them who recounts His signs to them and makes them pure and teaches them the Book and wisdom even though they had been before certainly, clearly going astray.* (62:2)

They makes manifest what was being concealed of the Book and pardon much: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you much of what you had been concealing*

*of the Book and pardons much. Surely, from God drew near you a light and a clear Book.* (5:15)

They make manifest the way of life: *O People of the Book! Surely, Our Messenger drew near you. He makes manifest to you the way of life—after an interval without Messengers—so that you say not: There drew not near us either a bearer of good tidings or a warner. Then, surely, drew near to you a bearer of good tidings and a warner. And God is Powerful over everything.* (5:19)

They are protectors; perform the formal prayer; give the purifying alms; and are ones who bow down: *Your protector is only God and His Messenger and those who believed and those who perform the formal prayer and give the purifying alms and they are ones who bow down.* (5:55) *They state what was sent forth to them from the Lord: O Messenger! State what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord, for if **you** have not accomplished it, then, **you** will not have stated His message. And God will save **you** from the harm of humanity. Truly, God guides not the folk, the ones who are ungrateful* (5:67); they eat food: *The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger. Surely, Messengers passed away before him. And his mother was a just person (f). They both had been eating food. Look on how We make manifest the signs to them. Again, look on how they are misled!* (5:75)

They are sent to deliver the message: *What is with the Messenger is not but the delivering of the message. And God knows whatever you show and whatever you keep back* (5:99).

They call to what gives life: *O those who believed! Respond to God and to the Messenger when He called you to what gives you life. And know, truly, that God comes between a man and his heart and that to Him you will assemble.* (8:24)

They disassociate themselves from those who made a contract with the polytheists who violated it: God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it: (9:1) *They are free from polytheists* (9:3); they struggle in God's way: *Say: If had been your fathers and your children and your brothers/sisters and your spouses and your kinspeople and the wealth you gained and the transactions you dread slacken and the dwellings with which you are well-pleased were more beloved to you than God and His Messenger and struggling in His Way, then, await until God brings His command. And God guides not the folk, ones who disobey* (9:24)

They receive tranquility and receive armies: *Again, God caused His tranquility to descend on His Messenger and on the ones who believed*

*and caused armies you see not to descend and punished those who were ungrateful. And this is the recompense of the ones who were ungrateful.* (9:26)

They are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth: *It is He Who sent His Messenger with the guidance and the way of life of The Truth so that He may uplift it over all ways of life, even if the ones who are polytheists disliked it.* (9:33)

They give of God's grace: *Better if they were well-pleased with what God gave them and His Messenger. And they had said: God is Enough for us. God will give to us of His grace and so will His Messenger. Truly, to God we are ones who quest.* (9:59)

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*They were about to hound you from the region*
*that they drive you out of it.*
*Then, they would not linger*
*in expectation behind you but for a little while.*
*This is, surely, a custom with whomever*
*We sent before you of Our Messengers.*
*And you will not find in Our custom any revision.* (17:76-17:77)

## COMMENTARY°

Driving a Messenger of God out of his land is a great offense that incurs severe punishment. God operates certain natural laws in this universe that are not altered for individual cases. This universe is not subject to coincidences that influence its existence; it is subject to constant natural laws.

In the case of the Quraysh, why were they not destroyed? When the situation is analyzed, it becomes clear that while they wanted to throw the Prophet out of Makkah, he eventually left voluntarily.

*Whoever was truly guided is truly guided only for his own soul.*
*And whoever went astray, then, only goes astray against it.*
*And no burdened soul bears the heavy load of another,*
*nor would We have been ones who punish*
*until We raised up a Messenger.* (17:15)

## COMMENTARY°

Whoever is guided is guided only to the good of his own soul, because the reward of his guidance will be for him; and whoever goes astray, goes astray only to its his soul's detriment, because the sin thereof will be held against it. No burdened, no sinful, soul shall bear the burden of another, soul. And We never chastise, anyone, until We

have sent a messenger, to make clear to him that which is his obligation....

Yet as a sign of God's grace, He does not leave human guidance dependent only on the signs that are available in the universe. Nor does He leave him to the covenant God has made with human nature before a person is born. He has sent Messengers to warn and remind. This is certainly an aspect of God's grace which gives everyone ample opportunity to follow His guidance. Only when they have been properly warned and still persist in error does He punish them, if He so wills.

*So assume not that God will be one who breaks His promise*
*to His Messengers.*
*Truly, God is Almighty, Possessor of Requital.* (14:47)

## COMMENTARY°

What the ungrateful devise is of no consequence. It cannot obstruct the fulfillment of God's promise to His Messengers to grant them victory and to inflict a mighty punishment on the ungrateful. He does not let injustice escape punishment. Those who resort to scheming and devising foul plans will not be spared. The word "requital" is especially suitable here as it gives the meaning that counters both injustice and wicked scheming. A perpetrator of such injustice and wickedness deserves to suffer God's vengeance, which is, from God's point of view, the exercise of divine justice.

*God prescribed: I will prevail, truly, I and My Messengers.*
*Truly, God is Strong, Almighty.* (58:21)

*And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,*
*but by revelation or from behind a partition*
*or that He send a Messenger to reveal by His permission*
*what He wills.*
*Truly, He is Lofty, Wise.* (42:51)

## COMMENTARY°

God speaks to people in one of three ways. First, by revelation, which is given directly and the recipient knows that it comes from God. Secondly, from behind a veil, as God spoke to Moses whose request to see God was denied. In fact, he was unable to stand firm when God's glory was revealed to the mountain. The third form of address is that God sends a messenger, who is an angel, to reveal by His command what He will. This takes different forms, which the Prophet explained as follows:

1. The angel would impart to him something he recognized within himself, without seeing the angel. The Prophet said: The Holy Spirit

has imparted to me that no soul will ever die until it has had whatever provisions assigned to it. Therefore, remain God-conscious and moderate your requests.

2. The angel would come to the Prophet in the form of a man who spoke to him and made sure that he understood what was being said to him.

3. The angel would give him the revelation in a way that sounded like a bell ringing in his ear. This was the hardest form for the Prophet. He would be perspiring even on a very cold day. If he was riding a camel, his camel would fall to the ground. The Prophet would see the angel in the angel's own form, giving him whatever God bid him give. This happened to him twice as mentioned in verses 53:7 and 52:13. Such were the different forms of contact and revelation. He bestows His revelation from on high, to whomever He chooses, according to His wisdom.

*God had not been forsaking the ones who believe*
*to what you are in until He differentiates*
*the bad from what is good.*
*And God will not inform about the unseen,*
*but God elects from His Messengers whom He wills.*
*So believe in God and His Messengers.*
*And if you believe and are Godfearing,*
*then, for you there is a sublime compensation.* (3:179)

*So have you patience as endured patiently*
*those imbued with constancy of the Messengers*
*and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.* (23:51)

## COMMENTARY°

Messengers are ... required to *do good deeds*. While taking action is common to all human beings, insisting on doing good is the characteristic of goodly people, providing a measure of control and a clear goal for their deeds. Again such people look up to the their society when they embark on anything.

No Messenger of God was ever required to abandon his humanity. Rather, what they were asked to do was to elevate this humanity to the highest standard God has made possible for human beings to achieve. Thus, the Prophets provided the role model and the ideal that other people should try to emulate. It is left to God to judge their actions according to His own fine measure.

*And when they heard*
*what was caused to descend to the Messenger,*
*you have seen their eyes overflow with tears*
*because they recognized The Truth.*
*They say: Our Lord! We believed*
*so write us down with the ones who bear witness.* (5:83)

## COMMENTARY°

And when they hear what has been revealed to the Messenger, you see their eyes overflow with tears because of the truth that they recognize. These were the priests and monks from whom people would seek blessings and anointment due to their knowledge of the religion. They came to the Prophet and the Quran was recited for them. They were deeply moved by it so that their eyes overflowed with tears, and they were not haughty, due to God's protecting them from pride.

*Certainly, there drew near to you a Messenger*
*from among yourselves. It was grievous to him*
*that you fell into misfortune. He is anxious for you*
*and to the ones who believe, gentle, compassionate.* (9:128)

## COMMENTARY°

There has come to you a Messenger from among yourselves, that is, one of you—Muhammad—for whom it is grievous, hard, that you should suffer, that is, your suffering, your experiencing hardship and encountering harm is hard on him; who is full of concern for you, that you should be rightly guided; to the believers full of pity, profoundly compassionate, merciful, desiring good for them.

### A MESSENGER FOR EVERY COMMUNITY

*Every community has its Messenger.*
*So, then, when their Messenger drew near,*
*it would be decided between them with equity.*
*And they, they will not be wronged.* (10:47)

## COMMENTARY°

And for every community, of the communities of this world, there is a Messenger. And when their Messenger comes to them, and they deny him, judgment is passed between them justly, fairly, such that they are punished and the Messenger, and all those who accepted his truthfulness, are delivered. They are not wronged by being punished for no crime.

## METHOD OF REVELATION

*And it had not been for a mortal that God speak to him,*
*but by revelation or from behind a partition*
*or that He send a Messenger to reveal*
*by His permission what He wills. Truly, He is Lofty, Wise.* (42:51)

### COMMENTARY°

And it is not possible for any human that God should speak to him except that He should reveal to him by revelation, in sleep or by inspiration, or, except, from behind a veil, where He makes the person able to hear His speech but without seeing Him—as was the case with Moses; or, except, that He should send a messenger, an angel, such as Gabriel, and he, the messenger, then reveals, to the person to whom he has been sent, that is to say, and then he speaks to him, with His permission, that is, God's, whatever He, God, will. Truly He is Exalted, above the attributes of created beings, Wise, in His actions.

*What will there be as a reminder for them?*
*A clear Messenger drew near them.* (44:13)

### COMMENTARY°

God, exalted be He, says: How can there be a reminder for them, that is to say, faith will not benefit them once the chastisement has been sent down, when already there has come to them a manifest Messenger, whose Message is plain to understand.

## GOD RESCUES THE MESSENGERS

*Again, We rescue Our Messengers and those who believed.*
*Thus, it is an obligation upon Us*
*to deliver the ones who believe.* (10:103)

### COMMENTARY°

This passage is then concluded with the final outcome of every message and every opposition to it, making plain the lessons of the histories reported in the sign: This is the promise God has made: the seed of faith will retain its healthy function. It will be safe after every type of persecution to which its advocates are subjected. It will survive every denial and every torture inflicted on its advocates.

## MESSENGERS DELIVER THE CLEAR MESSAGE

*Messengers are ones who give good tidings*
*and ones who warn so that humanity not be in disputation*

*against God after the Messengers.*
*And God had been Almighty, Wise.* (4:165)

## COMMENTARY°

Messengers bearing good tidings of reward for those that believe and warning of punishment for those that disbelieve; We sent them, so that people might have no argument, to make, against God after, the sending of, the Messengers, to them; thus We sent them to preempt such excuses. God is ever Mighty, in His kingdom, Wise, in His actions.

*And ask ones whom We sent before you of Our Messengers:*
*Made We gods other than the Merciful to be worshiped?* (43:45)

## COMMENTARY°

And ask those of Our Messengers whom We sent before you: Did We ever appoint, besides the Compassionate One, that is to say, any other than Him, gods to be worshipped?

*And those who ascribed partners with God said:*
*If God willed neither would we have worshiped other than Him*
*anything, we nor our fathers, nor would we have held sacred*
*anything other than what He forbade.*
*Thus, accomplished those who were before them.*
*Then, what is upon the Messengers,*
*but the delivering of the clear message?*
*And, certainly, We raised up in every community a Messenger*
*saying that: Worship God and avoid false deities.*
*Then, of them were some whom God guided*
*and of them were some upon whom their fallacy was realized.*
*So journey through the earth;*
*then, look on how had been the Ultimate End*
*of the ones who deny.*
*If you be eager for their guidance,*
*then, truly, God will not guide whom He causes to go astray.*
*And they will have no ones who help.* (16:35-16:37)

People's acceptance of divine guidance is not the result of the Prophet's deliberations and efforts. This is not his task. His mission is only to deliver the message God gave him. Guidance and error are subject to God's law that never fails, bringing the same results every time. Whoever deserves to remain in error according to God's law shall not receive His guidance. That is because of the operation of the laws God has set in nature. This is His will that is always done. Hence, "they

shall have none to support them." Besides, who can support them against God?

*And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you to their own folk.*
*They drew near them with the clear portents.*
*Then, We requited those who sinned.*
*And it had been an obligation*
*on Us to help ones who believe.* (30:47)

## COMMENTARY°

Similar to sending the winds bearing good news is the sending of messengers with veritable signs of the truth. Yet people did not receive this aspect of God's grace, which is much greater and further reaching than the wind that brings the prospect of rain. Nor did they benefit by them as they did by rain, even though their messages were far more beneficial and longer lasting. Essentially, they took two different attitudes towards God's Messengers. Some of them refused to believe or reflect on God's messages (or blamed God for their transgression) and continued to inflict harm on the Messengers and to turn people away from God's path. Others, who believed, recognized God's signs, offered thanks for His grace, and bore with patience the harm inflicted on them by the other group. Furthermore, they were confident that God's promise would come true. The outcome was in accordance with divine justice and in fulfillment of His certain promise.

God's support may appear, in people's reckoning, to be slow in coming, because they have a measure and a perspective that are different from His. He, in His knowledge and wisdom, fulfills His promise at the time He chooses in accordance with His law. People may or may not be able to appreciate the wisdom of His timing. Yet His will brings the best; it is His timing that is the most appropriate, and it is His promise that will most certainly be fulfilled. Believers who reflect the quality of patience in adversity await its fulfillment with unshakeable confidence.

These signs (30:47; 38:14; 35:4; 40:70; 6:34) speak of the patience and perseverance of the Messengers when faced with denial, ridicule and mockery. As a commentator states: The majority of people reject the message as false and inflict hardship on its advocates who, in turn, face all this with patience and perseverance. The ultimate outcome, however, is victory, which comes at the time determined by God. That outcome is not precipitated by the fact that honest and devoted advocates have to bear hardship and rejection, or that hardened criminals are able to inflict torment on innocent, defenseless people. Nor is it hastened by the fact that a totally dedicated advocate of faith is keen to see his people follow divine guidance, simply because he loves them

and feels distressed when he sees them in their erroneous ways, knowing what punishment awaits them in the life to come. God does not hasten things because anyone of His creatures is over enthusiastic to see the end. There is simply no way that God's words can be altered, whether they relate to the ultimate victory or the appointed time. What we have here is a statement combining seriousness and decisiveness with consolation and reassurance.

## Messengers Denied, Maligned and Ridiculed

*All of them denied the Messengers*
*so My repayment was realized.* (38:14)
*And if they deny you, surely, Messengers before you were denied.*
*And to God all affairs are returned.* (35:4)
*Those who denied the Book and that with which We sent*
*Our Messengers? Then, they will know.* (40:70)

*And, certainly, Messengers before you were denied*
*yet they endured patiently that they were denied*
*and they were maligned until Our help approached them.*
*And no one will change the Word of God.*
*And, certainly, there drew near you*
*tidings of the ones who are sent.* (6:34)

## Commentary°

Advocates of God's message have continued along the same difficult way, overcoming numerous hurdles. They move along with steady steps, opposed by wrongdoers of all sorts, rejected by those who have chosen to go astray and their followers. Harm may be inflicted on some of those advocates, pressure, torture, and death. Yet the advocates of the truth will move on, maintaining their way, undeterred. The outcome remains the same, long as it may take.

We cannot appreciate fully the whole idea unless we recall vividly that these are words addressed by God, the Lord of all worlds, to his noble Prophet who has shown maximum perseverance and who is one of the Messengers endowed with the strongest resolve. He patiently endured all that his people tried to inflict on him. He never uttered a prayer akin to that of the Prophet Noah, despite his long and arduous suffering. He is being told how God's law works. If he finds their rejection and aversion too much to cope with and wants to bring them a miraculous sign, then he is free to do so. He may, in the process, try to find a chasm to go deep into the earth or a ladder to ascend to heaven for the purpose.

## MESSENGERS AND THOSE WHO WOULD NOT BELIEVE

*....and the companions of Midian. And Moses was denied,*
*but I granted indulgence to the ones who are ungrateful.*
*Again, I took them and how had been My disapproval!* (22:44)

### COMMENTARY°

The sign ends with a rhetorical question that stresses the frightening effect of God's punishment: *How had been My disapproval*! The Arabic word, *nakir*, used here for 'rejection', carries added connotations of violent change. The question needs no answer, as it is well known: it was a rejection demonstrated through great floods, destruction, earthquakes, fearful hurricanes, and the like....

Numerous indeed were those towns and cities which suffered their inevitable doom as a result of their evildoing.... Roofs are caved in as walls are made to collapse, leaving a depressing sight of total, lifeless ruin. The scene invites contemplation, because ruins have a very strong effect on people, causing them to reflect. Next to these desolate remains of destroyed cities lie abandoned wells, reminding visitors of past days when people gathered around them for fresh water. And next to these are deserted palaces that once stood proudly in the past, but which now lie empty, evoking only images and memories of a glorious past....

Emphasis is here placed on the location of hearts in people's bodies, which serves to amplify the blindness of those hearts in particular. Had those hearts been able to reflect on the scenes portrayed, they would have remembered and people's eyes would have been tearful. They would have moved towards faith, at least as a result of fearing an end like the ones that befell other communities.

The use of a rhetorical question is also often found in the Quranic signs. They require a deep probing into their meaning to uncover what things appear to be. Not only do the signs ask questions, but they also appropriately follow up the questions that they ask.

## MESSENGERS SAY

*Their Messengers said: Is there any uncertainty about God,*
*One Who is Originator of the heavens and the earth?*
*He calls you so that He would forgive you your impieties*
*and postpone for you a term, that which is determined.*
*They said: You are only mortal like us.*
*You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping.*
*Then, bring us a clear authority.*
*Their Messengers said to them: We are only mortals like you*

*except God shows His grace on whom He wills of His servants.*
*And it had not been for us that we bring you an authority,*
*but by the permission of God.*
*And in God let the ones who believe put their trust.* (14:10-14:11)

## COMMENTARY°

He calls you so that He may forgive you your sins and grant you respite for an appointed term. With this call to forgiveness, God does not demand an immediate positive response, nor does He inflict His punishment immediately when they make their first rejection. He grants them another favor by giving them a period of grace, either for a time He sets in this life or to the Day of Reckoning. During this respite they may reflect on various signs and indicators, and on the Messengers' warnings. Such respite is an act of grace, considering their negative response to His call.

Yet those ignorant people revert to their baseless objection: They replied: *You are mortal like us. You want to bar us from what our fathers had been worshipping.*

The phrase, *shows His grace*, is used here so that the dialogue fits in harmoniously with the general atmosphere of the sign. It is an atmosphere generated by speaking about God's grace which He bestows on whomever He chooses of His servants. His grace is limitless. It is not granted only to God's messengers, but rather affects humanity as a whole. For humanity has been honored by the choice of one of its number to undertake this great task of receiving a message from on high.

*We sent a Messenger to them from among them saying that:*
*Worship God! You have no god other than Him.*
*Will you, then, not be Godfearing?* (23:32)

## COMMENTARY°

The stories of earlier Prophets and Messengers are not meant to give a full account or to provide details. They are meant to emphasize the unity of the message given to all of them, and to make clear that they received the same response from all their different communities. Therefore, these accounts commence with Noah to indicate the starting point, and finish with Moses and Jesus to define the last point before the final message. No names are mentioned in between the start and the finish of this long chain. This serves to indicate the similarity of all intervening episodes. However, in every new case the essence of the message and the way it was received are clearly mentioned.

*....when their brother Salih said to them:*
*Will you not be Godfearing?*

*Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you,*
*so be Godfearing of God and obey me.*
*And I ask you not*
*for any compensation for it. My compensation is*
*only from the Lord of the worlds.* (26:142-26:145)

***

*....when their brother, Lot, said to them:*
*Will you not be Godfearing?*
*Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you*
*so be Godfearing of God and obey me.*
*And I ask you not for any compensation for it.*
*My compensation is only*
*from the Lord of the worlds.* (26:161-26:164)

***

*When Shuayb said to them: Will you not be Godfearing?*
*Truly, I am a trustworthy Messenger to you*
*so be Godfearing of God and obey me.*
*And I ask you not for*
*any compensation for it. My compensation is*
*only from the Lord of the worlds.* (26:177-26:180)

*And, truly, Elijah was of the ones who are sent when he said*
*to his folk: Will you not be Godfearing?* (37:123-27:124)

## COMMENTARY°

These Quranic signs (23:32; 26:143-145; 26:162-164; 26:177-180; 37:123-124) indicate the critical vocabularly that defines monotheism.

*Say: O humanity! Truly, I am the Messenger of God to you all*
*of Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth.*
*There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.*
*So believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet,*
*who believes in God and His words and follow him*
*so that perhaps you will be truly guided.* (7:158)

## COMMENTARY°

This sign (7:158) makes some important, though subtle, points which should be outlined. To start with, this address implies an order to believe in God and His Messenger. This is the same implication as the declaration that there is no deity other than God and that Muhammad is God's Messenger. This is certainly the essence of faith. This order is preceded by an outline of God's essential attributes: It is to Him *to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes to die.* Hence, it

is an order to believe in God, having learned His true and essential attributes, and learned that this message applies to all humanity.

It also implies that the unlettered Prophet believes in God and His word. While this goes without saying, drawing attention to it here is quite important. Before a person advocates a certain cause, he himself must believe in it and must have its essentials clear in his mind so that he knows the true nature of what he advocates. Hence, the Prophet sent as God's Messenger to all humanity is described as one *who believes in God and His words.* This is exactly what he calls on people to believe.

The address also refers to the practical requirements of the faith which the Messenger calls on people to accept. When they have accepted faith, they are required to abide by its law and to follow its teachings. This is stated clearly in God's own words: ... *and follow him so that perhaps you will be truly guided.* There is simply no way that people can benefit by the guidance given to them through God's Messenger unless they follow in practice what that Messenger says. It is not sufficient that they should believe in it, unless that belief is endorsed by practice. Had the faith been merely a matter of beliefs only, it would have been sufficient to say: *to believe in God and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet.* But God has followed this by the order to follow the Prophet in everything that he has given us.

Having commanded the Prophet to declare that his message applies to all humanity, the Quranic [signs] continue to make it clear that the Prophet's role is to make people fully aware of who is their true Lord.

## CRITICAL THINKING•

### QUESTIONING DEEPLY: RAISING AND PURSUING SIGNIFICANT QUESTIONS

**Principle•**

When reading a sign (verse, *ayah*), critical thinkers look for the issues that underlie the claims that are expressed. They come to their own understanding of the details. They then place this in a larger context. They move between the basic underlying issues and the larger picture of the issue at hand. They remain focused on the issue as they follow a line of thought. They organize the issues in their own way as they continue to raise questions about the issue as they increase their knowledge.

**Application•**

This Quranic Studies program has been developed to clarify and settle questions peculiar to itself. Teachers should use such questions to organize and unify details covered in Quranic studies. The basic questions everyone faces include the nature of right and wrong, how we know things, and so on. In order to develop a framework for organizing details, both general and specific Quranic ideas should be continuously raised.

Allow students to have extended discussions on thought-provoking ideas. Maintain a focus in the discussion so that multiple issues are discussed. Help students be clear about their objectives and made to feel that they are moving towards them in an affective way.

The class can begin exploration of an important topic in the Quranic sign below. Help them divide up the task of reading and taking notes on the references. The class can then discuss the Quranic signs, and ask questions to guide further understandings. They should then share their research with each other or each student could write an essay putting all of the ideas together.

## SUMMARY OF QURANIC SIGNS

Messengers:

- were sent with the signs of God and with a clear authority.
- were given grace, they were delivered from great distress.
- God helped them so they became victors.
- were given the Manifest Book.
- were guided to a straight path.
- were left with a good name, sympathetic and forbearing.
- bear witness
- have no fallacy in them
- have no foolishness in them
- say nothing but the truth
- are devoted
- are sincere in their promise
- eat food and walk in the market
- are Messengers of the Lord of the worlds
- deliver messages from God
- God is content with them
- bring the signs with the permission of God
- reveal by God's permission what God wills
- are mortal
- receive the revelation that there is no god but God so worship God
- are monotheists who are given the Book, clear portents
- are a witness to humanity
- teach us what we know not
- ask for God's help and say: God's help is near
- will war with God against those who practice usury
- believe in what is sent forth to them; believe in God, His angels, His Books and His other Messengers and separate and divide not among anyone of His Messengers: and they believe in what was sent forth to them from their Lord
- Prophets made a solemn promise to follow a Messenger who drew near to them with that which establishes as true what is with him, will believe in him and will help him:
- bring mercy if one believes in them

- receive grace from God; they recite the signs, purify those who follow them, teach them the Book and wisdom
- have authority; if people contend with one another, they should refer it to God and the Messenger
- ask for forgiveness for those who repent
- draw near with the Truth
- receive a part of the spoils of war
- some have been driven out
- are sincere
- are given spouses and offspring
- give judgment against ones who believe not
- give permission to those who ask for permission
- recount the signs of God, ones that are made manifest to bring out those who have believed and the ones who have acted in accord with morality from the shadows to the light
- recount the purified scrolls wherein are truth-loving Books
- are a witness against us and we against humanity
- ask for forgiveness of others
- are a light sent forth from God
- had torment inflicted on them
- Messenger Jesus established as true what was in advance of him in the Torah and gives good tidings of one to approach after him
- are given tranquility and fastened with the Word of God-consciousness
- are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth that God may uplift over all of the ways of life
- some are unlettered, from among the people
- recount God's signs to them, purify and teach the Book and wisdom
- makes manifest what was being concealed of the Book and pardon much
- make manifest the way of life
- are protectors; perform the formal prayer; give the purifying alms; and are ones who bow down
- are sent to deliver the message
- call to what gives life
- disassociate themselves from those who made a contract with the polytheists who violated it: God and His Messenger declare disassociation from those with whom you made a contract among the ones who were polytheists who violated it
- receive tranquility and receive armies
- are sent with guidance and way of life of The Truth
- give of God's grace
- sent to every community

- receive revelation from behind a partition or from an angel messenger
- God rescues them
  - God sends His disapproval on those who believe not in Messengers
    - say: worship God. You have no god other than Him.
- Jesus was confirmed with the hallowed spirit
- Jesus was a Messenger to the Children of Jacob
- Jesus had been taught the Book, Wisdom, the Torah and the Gospel.
- Jesus drew near with a sign from the Lord
- Jesus created the likeness of a bird from clay
- Jesus breathed into it and it became a bird with God's permission
- Jesus cured one who was blind from birth and the leper
- Jesus gave life to dead mortals with the permission of God
- Jesus told the people of his time what they eat and what they store up in their houses; established as true what was before him of the Torah and permitted some of what had been forbidden to the people before; and drew near with a sign from the Lord

**HELPFUL HINTS ABOUT QUESTIONING•**

Raise basic issues.
Explore beneath the surface of things.
Follow-up problematic areas of thought.
Help students discover the structure of their own thought.
Help students develop sensitivity to clarity, accuracy and relevance.
Help students arrive at judgment through their own reasoning.
Help students note claims, evidence, conclusions, questions-at-issue, assumptions, implications, consequences, concepts, interpretations, and the Quranic point of view.

**TO PARTICIPATE EFFECTIVELY IN QUESTIONING, ONE MUST•**

Listen carefully to what the Quranic sign is saying.
Take it seriously.
Look for reasons and evidence in it.
Recognize and reflect on any assumptions.
Discover implications and consequences.

*Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book. They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say: We will be forgiven. If an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it. Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book that they would say about God only The Truth? Did they not study what is in it, and know that the Last Abode is better for those who are Godfearing? Will you not, then, be reasonable?* (7:169)

QUESTIONS FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION

Seek Quranic examples and analogies to these signs.
Seek to distinguish what one knows from what one merely assumes.
Seek to enter empathetically into the perspectives of those who are unjust to themselves.
Be on the alert for inconsistencies, vagueness and other possible problems in thought in your classroom discussions.

*Truly, those whom the angels gathered to themselves—ones who are unjust to themselves—they* [the angels] *will ask: In what condition had you been?*

*They* [those where were unjust to themselves] *will say: We had been ones taken advantage on the earth due to our weakness.*

*They* [the angels] *will say: Be not the earth of God that which is extensive enough to emigrate in it?*

*Then, for those, their place of shelter will be hell. How evil a Homecoming!* (4:97)

QUESTIONS TO ASK STUDENTS•

What do you think is the main issue in each of the Quranic examples?
Let me see if I understand you. Do you mean x or y?
How does this relate to our discussion (problem, issue)?
Could you give me an example?
Would this be an example?
Could you explain that further?
Would you say more about ht?
Why do you say that?
What do you think so-and-so meant by his remark?

STUDENTS SUMMARIZE A SIGN OR SIGNS

The students should choose a particular sign (*ayah*) or signs (*ayat*) and analyze it or them.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I was able to study and learn skills that I had not been good at.
I practice these skills whenever possible.
I am able to recognize and correct your weaknesses because I know this is a sign of gaining strong thinking skills.

## SEGMENT 4: THE ONES WHO ARE SENT

Among the mentioned as ones who are sent are: Elijah, Lot, David, Salih, Hud, Solomon, Jonah and Muhammad.

*And We sent not before you any ones who are sent*
*but that, truly, they eat food and walk in the markets.*
*And We made some of you as a test for some others.*
*Will you endure patiently, and your Lord had been Seeing.* (25:20)

### COMMENTARY°

This sign addresses the Prophet consoling and reassuring him, telling him that his was not a special case among God's Messengers. They all shared the same essential attributes: If the ungrateful voice objections, these are not made against the Prophet in person; rather, they are objections to God's words that are put in place for a definite purpose. Thus, those who do not appreciate God's wisdom and plans will object, while those who have full trust in His wisdom and support will persevere and remain reassured. The divine message will continue the struggle using human means and methods, so that those who have faith will demonstrate their patience in adversity. He sees human nature, and what is in people's inner thoughts. He sees to what end each one is driving. We note here the use of the possessive pronoun, *your Lord*, to give the Prophet a feeling of comfort and reassurance. God knows what best affects people's hearts and feelings.

### DUTIES OF ONES WHO ARE SENT

*Abraham said: O ones who are sent,*
*what is your business?* (51:31)

*We send not the ones who are sent,*
*but as ones who give good tidings and ones who warn.*
*So whoever believed and made things right,*
*then, there will be neither fear in them*
*nor will they feel remorse.* (6:48)

### COMMENTARY°

When this passage of warning has reached its peak, having portrayed several scenes, making inspiring comments on each of them and giving serious warnings that have their effect on people's hearts, it is concluded with a statement outlining the task of the Ones Who Are Sent by God. Their communities demand supernatural miracles but their duty is merely to convey a message, bringing happy news and giving stern warnings. They have no say in people's fate, which is

determined by the attitudes people choose to adopt for themselves.

## THE ONES WHO ARE SENT ARE DENIED, MOCKED

*We send not the ones who are sent,*
*but as ones who give good tidings and as ones who warn.*
*And those who were ungrateful dispute with falsehood*
*in order to refute The Truth by it.*
*And they took My signs to themselves*
*—and what they were warned of—in mockery.* (18:56)

## CRITICAL THINKING•

### PRACTICING DISCUSSION: CLARIFYING AND QUESTIONING INTERPRETATIONS

Quranic critical thinkers are never without questions to ask as the Quranic continuously ask. It is through exploring questions that the sacred text is able to clarify interpretations. Through their questioning, students explore the basic ideas. Going beyond what things appear to be, they not only study Quranic questions, but are able to ask many more themselves.

### QUESTIONS HELP STUDENTS LEARN•

How to think
How to expand their ideas before they are evaluated
How to confront new ideas
How to relate new ideas to their own experience
How to determine the implications of their ideas and their consequences

Another important point to note for students is that Quranic critical thinkers are not made uncomfortable by questions. They do not consider someone asking them questions to be offensive or even intimidating. They actually welcome questions.

### WAYS FOR STUDENTS TO LEARN TO QUESTION•

Discover a multiple of ways to ask questions that explore the logic of what they are reading, hearing or thinking.
Explore and question assumptions, judgments, inferences, what may appear to be contradictory or inconsistent.
Question the relevance of what they are studying.
Probe the evidence for and against what others say.
Question themselves and others.

### FOR CLASSROOM DISCUSSION•

Stimulate the students to ask questions about the Quranic signs.
Make the students comfortable when questioned so that they learn to value and master the questioning process.
Introduce questions in such a way that students come to see it as a

way to get to the heart of matters and understand things from a different point of view.
Do not negate or embarrass the students.
Make sure the atmosphere is one of mutual support and cooperation.
Question the students about their reasoning behind their ideas.

Any thought-provoking questions can start a discussion. To follow up responses, use questions like the following:

Right after a classroom discussion, have the students write a 5-minute summary of the key points, raising new questions and adding examples or clarifying points mentioned. Or, divide the students into pairs and have them practice questioning each other about the points raised. It helps if the teacher summarizes and rephrases the main points from time to time during the classroom discussion.

*But he who would say to ones who are his parents a word of disrespect to both of them: Do you promise me that I will be brought out when generations before me passed away? They will both cry to God for help: Woe unto you! Believe! Truly, the promise of God is true. But he said: This is only the fables of the ancient ones.* (46:17)

If you want to teach them how to ask a question of clarification, explain to them that whenever they are dealing with a complex problem, they should form the question in several different ways until they find the most precise question to ask. Or whenever the class is going to discuss a Quranic sign, write out beforehand the most significant questions. Be prepared to change the question if the discussion moves in another direction. Lead the discussion in such a way that the dialogue among the students moves towards an answer that makes sense.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

How would your rate yourself? Put a check by the ability you feel confident you have learned. Do not be discouraged if you feel you have not developed any of these abilities or just a few. It takes practice and hopefully with each lesson, you will improve these abilities:

I routinely ask questions to fill in the missing pieces in my learning.
I was able to elaborate further on this in the classroom.
I was able to give an example of this in our classroom discussion.
I am beginning to be able to connect what I am learning to my life.

## Segment 5: The Mothers, Wives, Daughters of the Prophets, Messengers and the Ones Who Are Sent, the Woman Who Saved Moses and Other Female Relationships

*And, certainly, We sent Messengers before you and We assigned for them spouses and offspring* (13:38) clearly states that Messengers were given spouses and offspring, yet most often in books written on the history of the Messengers and Prophets, reference is not made to them and the roles that they played. However, fair-mindedness requires they be mentioned—the good among them as well as those who were ungrateful. The following are brief descriptions of their mention in the Quran.

### The Mother of Cain and Abel Implied

*He* (Abel) *said: Truly, God receives only*
*from the ones who are Godfearing.*
*If you were to extend your hand against me*
*so that you would kill me,*
*I would not be one who stretches out my hand*
*towards you so that I kill you*
*I fear God, Lord of the worlds.*
*Truly, I want that you will draw the burden*
*of my sin and your sin,*
*then, to be among the Companions of the Fire.*
*That is the recompense of the ones who are unjust.*
*Then, his soul prompted him* (Cain) *to kill his brother.*
*And he killed him and became*
*among the ones who are losers.*
*Then, God raised up a raven to scratch the earth,*
*to cause him to see how to cover up*
*the naked corpse of his brother.*
*He says: Woe to me! Was I unable to be like this raven*
*to cover up the naked corpse of my brother?*
*Then, he became among*
*the ones who were remorseful.* (5:27-5:31)

#### Commentary°

[Eve's] two sons were in a situation that gives no rise to any thought of aggression in a good person's mind. The situation is one of obedience to God and offering a sacrifice to draw closer to God.
We note that the passive mode is used here to indicate that the accept-

ance or rejection of the offered sacrifice is done by a higher power in a metaphysical way. This mode of expression suggests to us two points. The first is that we should not try to determine how exactly the offering was accepted. The second point suggests that the one whose offering was accepted had not committed any crime that might cause anyone else to be angry with him to any extent, let alone that that person should plot a murder..

The latter declaring that he will kill the other is a statement of confirmed intention which is met by our disapproval because it is totally unjustified. Indeed, it could only be the result of blind envy that is alien to a good heart. Thus, from the very first moment, we take an attitude of total disapproval of aggression. The sign, however, greatly enhances the ghastliness of this act of aggression by showing the peaceful, good-natured attitude of the other brother.

## THE WOMAN WHO SAVED MOSES

*And the woman of Pharaoh said:*
*He will be a comfort to our eyes for me and for **you**.*
*Kill him not. Perhaps he may profit us*
*or we may take him to ourselves as a son.*
*But they are not aware.* (28:9)

### COMMENTARY°

Yet how will all this come about when the child is so helpless? The chapter tells us straightaway: (28:9) God's hand not only delivers the child into Pharaoh's fortified palace by way of an open challenge, it also takes him right into his wife's heart, thus providing him with loving protection. It thus gives him a thin, transparent cover of love overflowing from a woman's heart. Thus, he needs neither weapons, authority nor money for his protection. Such love defies Pharaoh, his despotism and his fear for his kingdom. Pharaoh is too small and humble in God's measure: the child needs no more than this thin covering of love to enjoy complete protection from him.

*A comfort to our eyes for me and for **you**.* (28:9) This is how she describes the child brought to them, the one who will become their enemy and bring them all, except for the woman herself, much grief. *Kill him not*! yet it is he who will bring about Pharaoh's end. *Perhaps he may profit us or we may take him to ourselves as a son,* when it will be through him that their fate will be sealed. *But they were not aware* (of what was to happen). (28:9)

*And God propounded an example for those who believed:*
*Behold the woman of Pharaoh; she said: My Lord, build for me near*
***You** a house in the Garden and deliver **You** me from Pharaoh and*

*his actions and deliver me from the folk,*
*the ones who are unjust.* (66:11)

## COMMENTARY°

Pharaoh's wife was living in the midst of sweeping ingratitude, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all connection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it. She disowned Pharaoh's people while at the same time living in their midst.

*****

Pharaoh's wife, the woman took Moses from the Nile, is an example of thinking independently. She realized that the beliefs that Moses was teaching were far more meaningful than worshipping the Pharaoh as the Pharaoh demanded. She was not limited by following those around her and their accepted ways of doing things. She strove to determine for herself what she believed and when to pray for what she desired, a place in heaven.

## THE MOTHER OF ISHMAEL IMPLIED

*And when Abraham saia*
*My Lord! Make this land that which is safe*
*and cause me and my children [family]*
*to turn away from worshipping idols.*
*Our Lord! I caused some of my offspring*
*to dwell in an unsown valley.* (14:35-14:36)

## COMMENTARY°

The name of the mother of Ishmael, Hagar, is not mentioned in the Quran. There is an indirect mention in (14:35) where one would logically include her, having been the mother of Ishmael. It is only in the commentaries that we learn about her.

Ibn Ishaq also said: Ishmael's mother, Hagar, the mother of the Arabs, came from a town in Egypt facing the town of Farama.[10]
The Prophet had said: When you conquer Egypt treat its people well, for they can claim our protection and kinship. Ibn Ishaq asked al-Zuhri what the Prophet meant by making them our kin. He replied: Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, was of their stock.

*****

A contemporary writer describes Hagar based on the Traditions: To the west of the Kabah is an addition, changing its shape and giving a direction to it. What is this? A short, arched wall facing the Kabah.

What is it named? The *hijr* of Ishmael!

*Hijr*? What does that mean? Skirt! And it actually resembles a skirt. The skirt of a dress, the dress of a woman!

Yea. An Egyptian woman. A slave! A black slave. The slave of another woman! A slave, so humble, that the other woman chose her as her husband's mistress. That is, she was so abased that she will never be considered as being a rival wife. And her husband slept with her for her to bear a child.

A woman who in human systems lacked every dignity, every honor, and then God united the mystery of her skirt with the mystery of His existence. This is the skirt of Hagar's dress! The skirt which nourished Ishmael.

Here is Hagar's home. Hagar is buried near the third pillar of the Kabah. Amazing![11]

No one, not even a Prophet should be buried in the mosque. And here, the House of God, wall to wall with the house of a female slave. And the House of God, the burial place of a mother.

What am I saying? God's non-direction is only directed from her skirt! The Kabah has extended towards her! There is only a small space between this arch and the house.

One can pass through this space when circling the House. But circling around the Kabah, the mystery of monotheism, without circling around her skirt is not accepted. It is not a *hajj*. It is a command. A Command of God.

All of humanity, in the always of the ages, all who believe in monotheism, all who have accepted God's invitation, should, in their circumambulation of love around God, around the Kabah, circumambulate around the skirt of her dress as well.

Her house, her grave, her skirt, also, are part of the circumambulation, are a part annexed to the Kabah. For the Kabah, this absolute, non-direction is only directed towards this skirt. The Kabah is directed towards the skirt of an African slave, a good mother. The perpetual place of circumambulation of humanity.

The God of monotheism, seated alone upon His Omnipotent Throne, rejecting all galaxies behind Him, beyond everything which exists, He is Alone, and, in His heavenly kingdom, Unique. But it seems as if from among all His creatures, in His infinite Creation, He selected one.

The noblest of His creatures, the human being. And among all? A woman. And among all? A black woman. And among all? A black

slave woman. And among all? A black female slave of a woman. The most humiliated of His creatures! He has placed her beside Himself, a place beside His House. Becomes her neighbor.

And now Under the roof of this House, two: One, God, And the other, Hagar. The unknown soldier has been so chosen in the nation of monotheism. All of the hajj is joined to the memory of Hagar.

And *hijrah* or migration, the greatest deed, the greatest command is derived from the word *hajar*. And *muhajir* or emigrant/immigrant, the greatest divine-like human being, a Hagar-like person.

And what is migration? A Hagar-like deed. .

In the words of Islam, it means to return to *kufr* after having found faith. Thus, *kufr* means savagery and religion means civilization. And *hjr*, an Ethiopian word, means town or city in the language of Hagar and Hagar, a black African, Ethiopian slave woman. The manifestation of a pre-civilization human being and yet, here, the root of civilization.

Thus, a Hagar-like human being means a civilized one. A Hagar-like movement means the movement of humanity towards civilization. And now, in the movement of humanity around God's House, again, Hagar. Your place of circumambulation, O migrator who has resolved on God, is the Kabah of God and the skirt of Hagar.

What do we see? Our understanding cannot contain it! The sensitivities of a human being in the age of liberation and humanism hav not the power to bear this meaning! God in the house of a blac African, female slave!!!

Abraham makes reference to his offspring here. when he asks tha the land of Makkah be safe for he and his family, his family including the mother of Ismael, Hagar. We see yet another strong woman. Hagar was a woman who explored the implications and consequences of her situation to the extent that she became the founder of the city of Makkah, exchanging water from the Zamzam well to merchants traveling through that land for food and other goods that she and her son, Ishmael, needed.

## THE MOTHER OF ISAAC

*Then, his woman came forward with a loud cry.*
*She slapped her face and said:*
*I am an old barren woman!* (51:29)

### COMMENTARY°

Then his wife, Sarah, came forward clamoring, shouting and smote, slapped, her face, and said: *A barren old woman*! who has never given birth to a child, aged ninety-nine, with Abraham being one hundred years old; or alternatively he was a hundred and twenty years old and she was ninety years old.

This Quranic signs in reference to Sarah, the mother of Isaac, speaks to clarifying issues, conclusions or beliefs. The Messengers who appeared to Abraham to announce that he and Sarah would have a son, accurately stated their mission, but it was a difficult message for Sarah to accept as she had been barren throughout her life. The Messengers reassure her.

While Ishmael became the father of the Arab people, Isaac became the father of the Jewish people, both being the sons of Abraham.

*Abraham's woman, one who is standing up,*
*laughed when We gave her good tidings*
*of Isaac and besides Isaac, Jacob.* (11:71)

### COMMENTARY°

And his wife, that is, Abraham's wife, Sarah, standing by, serving them, laughed.

## THE MOTHER OF MOSES

*Certainly, We showed grace on you another time*
*when We revealed to your mother what is revealed:*
*Cast him adrift in the ark. Then, cast it adrift into the water of the*
*sea. Then, the water of the sea will cast him up on the bank*
*and he will be taken by an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his.*
*And I cast on you fondness from Me*
*that you be trained under My Eye.* (20:37-20:39)

### COMMENTARY°

But this is not all. Not only was Moses taken care of, but his mother could not be left at home worrying about her child. The two were soon reunited. (20:40) That was part of God's design.

### 28:7-28:13 THE STORY CONTINUES: COMMENTARY°

The story begins and we are told how God's hand works directly, and not through anyone else. Moses was born under the sort of difficult circumstances the chapter has described a newborn baby in great danger. We almost see the knife being taken out to cut his throat. His mother is so worried, fearing that the news of his birth might reach the despotic authorities. She is well aware that if it did she would not be able to protect or hide him. How could she prevent him from crying and so betraying his presence? She knew herself to be helpless and powerless.

At this point God's hand intervenes, making direct contact with

the worried mother, and inspiring her with what to do. *And We revealed to the mother of Moses: Breast feed him. But if you had feared for him, then, cast him into the water of the sea and neither fear nor feel remorse. Truly, We will be ones who restore him to you, ones who make him among the ones who are sent.* (28:7)

What sort of inspiration is this? A caring mother suckling her child is told to cast him into the river should she fear for his life. She is told, however, not to fear or grieve for him. He will be under the care of the One who provides all security and dispels all fear. He will be looked after by the hand that makes the fire a cool and relaxing place, and makes the sea a place of shelter and repose. No Pharaoh dare come near anyone this hand protects. You need not fear for his life or worry about his being taken away from you. (28:7) This is a promise for the future, and God's promise is certain to come true.

This is the first scene showing a worried mother as she received a clear, reassuring revelation that promises a bright future. The revelation removes all fear and worry from her heart, giving her peace and reassurance. The chapter does not mention how she reacted or how she carried out the instructions. Instead, the curtains fall only to rise again bringing us the next scene. *Then, the people of Pharaoh picked him out to be an enemy to them and a cause of grief. Truly, Pharaoh and Haman and their armies had been ones who are inequitable* (28:8)

Is this the security promised her? Does it augur the fulfillment o the happy news she has been given? How, when she feared for her son none other than Pharaoh and his household? It is they that now have him. Nothing could have worried her more than her child falling into their hands. Here, we see the challenge thrown down openly, in full view of all. It is a challenge to Pharaoh, Haman and their hosts. They were chasing down every newborn male in Moses' community because of fear for their own positions. Their spies were everywhere, so that no newly born boy could escape their watchful eyes. Now God's hand effortlessly puts into their very own midst such a child. It is indeed the child who will bring about their downfall. He is now in their hands and he is helpless, unable to fend for himself. Indeed, he cannot cry for help, should he be in danger. The purpose behind delivering the child to Pharaoh is also clearly stated. (28:8) He will certainly be an open foe, challenging them, and bringing grief and sorrow. Pharaoh, Haman and their armies had been ones who are inequitable....

What about his mother though, who must have been justifiably apprehensive? (28:10) She did as she was told and threw her child into the river. Where is he now? Where has the river carried him? She might well have asked herself how she could have done such a thing. How

could she even hope that he would find security in the midst of such danger?

The chapter portrays a telling picture of a poor mother's anxious heart. It is a one whereby she is unable to think or act. We can imagine her being driven in a moment of despair to give the whole thing away. (28:10) She needed to have faith in God's promise, to be patient in the adversity she was faced with and to continue to follow His guidance.

Here we see the working of God's will completing its scheme to thwart Pharaoh. It brings the child to them, they pick him up, and furthermore they are made to love him from the very first moment. Thus, they look for a suckling mother for him, but God made him refuse all breasts to increase their confusion and helplessness. Every time a new breast was offered to him he refused it. Thus they feared for the child's life. They continued in this situation until his sister saw him at a distance and recognized him. She soon realized how eager they were to find someone who could take care of him. She carefully approached them: Shall I direct you to a family who might bring him up for you and take good care of him? *And We forbade any breast feeding female for him before. Then, she* (the sister of Moses) *said: Shall I point you to the people of a house who will take control of him for you and they will be ones who will look after him?* (28:12) They were delighted with what she said, hoping that it could be true and that the child would be saved.

And We had forbidden him to take to the breasts of foster-mothers from before, that is to say, we prevented him from taking to the breasts of any suckling mother other than his own mother. Therefore he would not accept the breasts of any of the foster-mothers brought for him. So she, his sister, said, *Shall I point you to the people of a house*—having seen their affection for her brother— *who will take control of him for you* and they will be ones who will look after him— by having him suckled and so on, and who will act in good faith towards him?' Her suggestion was accepted. So she brought his mother and he took to her breast. She explained to them that he had taken to her breast because of her pleasant scent and the wholesome taste of her milk. Permission was given to her to breast-feed him in her own house and so she returned with him. . . .

This fourth scene is over, and the next one starts immediately, showing the child back with his mother, thriving, well protected by Pharaoh and cared for by his wife. While fear was everywhere around him, he enjoyed complete security: Thus We restored him to his mother, so that she might rejoice in him and grieve no more, and that she might know that God's promise always comes true; even though most people do not know this. *So We returned him to his mother that her eyes settle down and she not feel remorse and that she knows that the Promise of God is true. But most of them know not.* (28:13)

## THE MOTHER OF MARY

Chapter 19 of the Quran is named for Mary. Her story and that of her son, Jesus Christ, is quite extensive in this chapter and others, as well. Of note at this point is that unlike other Prophets, Messengers and Ones Who Are Sent, Jesus is given the name of Jesus son of Mary, Isa ibn Maryam, in the Quran.

*Truly, God favored Adam and Noah*
*and the people of Abraham*
*and the people of Imran above all the worlds,*
*some of one another's offspring.*
*And God is The Hearing, The Knowing.*
*Mention when the woman of Imran* (Hanna, Mary's mother) *said:*
*My Lord! I vowed to* ***You*** *what is in my womb—*
*that which is dedicated—so receive* ***You*** *this from me.*
*Truly,* ***You, You*** *alone are The Hearing, The Knowing.*
*Then, when she brought forth she said:*
*My Lord! Truly, I brought her forth, a female.*
*And God is greater in knowledge of what she brought forth.*
*And the male is not like the female.*
*And, truly, I named her Mary.*
*And, truly, I commend her to* ***Your*** *protection*
*and her offspring from the accursed Satan.* (3:33-3:36

### COMMENTARY°

The vow made by Imran's wife reveals to us the fact that she is a woman with a heart full of faith. She looks up to her Lord making an offering of the dearest thing to her, namely, the child she is bearing. She dedicates the child to her Lord, free of all conditions and all partnerships, free of all claims that may be made by anyone other than God. The Arabic term used here to denote that the offering is made absolutely purely to God is derived from the root meaning "freedom" or "liberation." This in itself is very significant. No one is truly free unless he devotes himself totally to God, liberating himself from servitude to anyone, anything, or any value.

When submission to God alone is total, it indicates total freedom. Any other situation is a form of slavery although it may appear in the guise of freedom.

This shows that to believe in God as the only Lord is perfect freedom. No human being is truly free if he recognizes any degree of authority that belongs to anyone other than God. When Islam preaches the Oneness of God, it preaches the only true form of human freedom.

These Quranic signs (3:33-3:36) shows the good faith and integrity exhibited by Hanna, the mother of Mary. She clearly recognized the need to be true to her own thought—that her child would be dedicated to the temple; to be consistent in the standards she applied: she gave birth to a female. Under Jewish law a female was not able to serve in the temple. Hanna honestly admitted the discrepancies between what she thought of doing and what she was actually able to do.

The devoted prayer of Hanna addresses to her Lord to accept her offering is an indication of her total submission to God. She appears to us free from all shackles. Her only motivation is to seek God's pleasure and acceptance:

She was hoping for a male child, because only male children were devoted for service in temples, so that they may free themselves from any preoccupation with anything other than worship and prayer. When she discovered that she had given birth to a daughter, she addressed her Lord in a sorrowful tone: *My Lord! Truly, I brought her forth, a female.*

She realizes that God is fully aware of the fact. She, however, makes the offering with what she has, and appears to apologize for not having a male child who might have been better able to fulfill the mission for which the baby was devoted.

This address sounds close, familiar, made by one who feels to be having a private conversation with her Lord, explaining what is on her mind and making her offering gently and directly. This is the type of relationship that God's chosen people have with their Lord: it is a relationship of friendship, closeness and simple address, free of all complications. They feel they are speaking with the One Who is near, loving and certain to respond.

## THE MOTHER OF YAHYA (JOHN)

He was named Yahya, the Living, because he breathed life into his barren mother's womb.

*And, truly, I* (Zechariah) *feared for my defenders after me.*
*And my woman had been a barren woman.*
*So bestow on me from that which*
*proceeds from Thy Presence a protector.*
*He will inherit from me and inherit from the family of Jacob.*
*And make him, my Lord, pleasing.* (19:5-19:6)

### COMMENTARY°

The assumptions and inferences of Zechariah, Yahya's father, are

based on a natural law so they seem to be plausible. However it was divine intervention that interceded to give he and his wife a child even though his wife had been barren all of her life.

(Zechariah) *said: My Lord!*
*How will I have a boy while my wife had been a barren woman*
*and surely I have reached an advanced old age?* (19:8)

## THE MOTHER OF JESUS

*And remember Mary in the Book*
*when she went apart from her people to an eastern place.*
*Then, she took to herself a partition away from them,*
*so We sent Our Spirit to her*
*and he presented himself before her as a mortal without*
*She said: Truly, I take refuge in The Merciful from* ***you;***
*come not near me if* ***you*** *had been devout.*
*He said: I am only a messenger from* ***your*** *Lord*
*that I bestow on* ***you*** *(f) a pure boy.*
*She said: How will I have a boy when no mortal touches me,*
*nor am I an unchaste woman?*
*He said: Thus, it will be.* ***Your*** *Lord said: It is for Me insignificant.*
*And: We will assign him as a sign for humanity*
*and as a mercy from Us.*
*And it had been that which is a decreed command.*
*So she conceived him*
*and she went apart with him to a farther place.*
*And the birth pangs surprised her at the trunk of a date palm tree.*
*She said: O would that I had died before thi*
*and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing.*
*So he cried out to her from beneath her:*
*Feel not remorse!*
*Surely,* ***your*** *Lord made under* ***you*** *(f) a brook.*
*And shake towards* ***you*** *(f) the trunk of the date palm tree.*
*It will cause ripe, fresh dates to fall on* ***you.***
*So eat and drink and* ***your*** *eyes be refreshed.*
*If* ***you*** *have seen any mortal, say:*
*I vowed formal fasting to The Merciful*
*so I will never speak to any human being this day.*
*Then, she approached her folk with him, carrying him.*
*They said: O Mary!*
*Surely,* ***you*** *had drawn near a monstrous thing!*
*O sister of Aaron!* ***Your*** *father had not been a morally evil man*

*nor had your mother been an unchaste woman.*
*Then, she pointed to him.*
*They said: How speak we to one*
*who had been in the cradle, a lad?*
*Jesus said: Truly, I am a servant of God.*
*He gave me the Book and He made me a Prophet.*
*And He made me one who is blessed wherever I had been*
*and He bequeathed to me*
*the formal prayer and the purifying alms*
*as long as I continue living,*
*and He makes me pious toward one who is my mother*
*and He makes me not haughty nor disappointed.*
*And peace be on me the day I was given birth*
*and the day I die and the day I am raised up, living.*
*That is Jesus son of Mary, a saying of The Truth.*
*They contest what is in it.* (19:16-19:34)[12]

## COMMENTARY°

"There is no question," contemporary women scholars write, "that Mary (19:16-34; 3:45-47; 5:75) is the female figure to whom the greatest attention is given in the Quran. There are 70 verses that refer to her, and she is named specifically in 34 of these (24 in relation to Jesus, son of Mary). Only three other persons—Moses, Abraham, and Noah, noted respectively 169, 69, and 43 times—are mentioned by name more frequently than is Mary. She is, in fact, the only woman who is identified by name in the Quran and she enjoys the special honor of having one of its 114 chapters titled after her (Maryam, Chapter 19). This chapter includes the narrative about Mary and her family, leading to the annunciation and birth of Jesus."[13]

The story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, as told through the Quranic signs (19:23-36) again teach critical thinkers good faith and integrity much as the previous women had done.

She is both shocked and shaken, which is only the normal reaction.... Her immediate reaction is to seek God's protection and to appeal to Him for support. She appeals to the person's sense of fearing God. She reminds him of God so that he may be restrained from attempting anything evil. So she seeks refuge in God from him and tells him not to come near her if he fears God. Should he be a God-fearing person, he would respond to the mere mention of God's name and His attribute of mercy. He would then resist any evil motive and restrain his desire.

For all she knew, he might have been an assailant playing a trick on her, exploiting her innocence. Yet what he tells her, in the privacy of that place, well away from others, is that he wants to give her a

child. How shocked must Mary have been? We cannot even begin to imagine. That is the second great shock for Mary.

Now she speaks frankly and plainly to him asking how she might have a child when no man has touched her. She is all alone with him, and the reason why he surprised her is now clear. She does not know yet how he will give her a child. Nor does it make matters any easier or less worrying for her that he has declared himself to be God's emissary. Nothing that he says about that child, stating that he will be pure and that nothing evil will be attached to his birth or moral conduct, is sufficient to reassure her. It is a situation where modesty is completely out of place. She must have the matter out and clear at once. How, then, could she have a child when she is a virgin, untouched by any man? She is not an unchaste woman about to agree to a sexual act that could produce a child.

Her questioning in this fashion suggests that up to that moment she could not conceive of any way by which that person could give her a child except the familiar way of sexual contact between a male and a female. This is the natural way, according to human perception.

Now the question arises as to whether the reference in these two different chapters is to the same thing or not. From our point of view, the references would appear to be different on each occasion. In the present chapter, Mary, it refers to Gabriel, the Holy Spirit, who was God's emissary to Mary. In Chapter 66 it refers to the spirit that Go breathed into Adam when He created him to make of him a huma being. He again breathed of it into Mary to bring about her conception. It is this divine breathing of the spirit that gives life with all its human characteristics. These include the qualities and faculties that enable the human being to be in contact with the Supreme Society, while also giving him his human feelings, intellect, thought, emotions and inspiration.

In Mary's case, Gabriel carried this breath of the spirit from God to place it into her. We must also add however that we do not know anything about the nature of the spirit, neither when it refers to Gabriel himself, nor when it has a different connotation. Both belong to the realm which is beyond our perception. We simply try to understand the relevant text in the two chapters and consider that the usage differs in each case.

As we read on, we see Mary in a remote place, away from her family and community. She is now in a far more terrible situation. Previously, she was up against all that her upbringing has instilled in her of moral values; but that was an internal struggle with herself. Now she is about to be faced with a public scandal. Besides, she was in great physical pain added to her psychological distress. In the midst of labor and childbirth she is driven to lean against the trunk of a palm tree.

Then she is told how to deal with her predicament when she meets other people. She need only impart to anyone by signal, not words, that she has made a vow not to speak to anyone. She is in full and complete devotion which prevents her from answering any questions. We imagine that her surprise lingered long, and that she took a while to take stock of her situation and stretch her hand to the trunk of the tree and shake it for her meal of dates. But when she fully realized what was happening, she was reassured that God would not abandon her. Indeed, He had given her all the proof she needed. He gave her a child who spoke from the moment of his birth to explain the miracle that had brought him into being.

*Mention when the angels said:*
*O Mary! Truly, God gives you (f) good tidings*
*of a Word from Him. His name is the Messiah*
*—Jesus son of Mary—*
*well-esteemed in the present and the world to come*
*and among the ones who are brought near.*
*And he will speak to humanity from the cradle*
*and in manhood and be among the*
*ones in accord with morality.*
*She said: My Lord! How is it I will be with child*
*when no mortal touches me?*
*He said: Thus, God creates whatever He wills.*
*When He decreed a command, then,*
*He only says to it: Be! Then, it is!* (3:45-3:47)

## COMMENTARY°

Mary is a young, virgin woman, a saint whose mother vowed, when she was still an unborn baby, that she would serve in the temple. No one had ever witnessed from her anything other than perfect purity and chastity. In fact people associated her with Aaron, the first of the temple's devout servants. For generations, her family were renowned for being God-fearing and a model of piety.

We see this young woman going off to be alone. The signs do not specify why she wanted to be alone, but there must have been something to so require her to be by herself, unseen by anyone else.

Once she is alone, screened from everyone and assured of complete privacy, she receives a great shock. She finds in front of her a Messenger Angel appearing as a man in his prime.

We can visualize this young woman ... and what she might have gone through in that moment when she was surprised by a young man appearing before her in her place of privacy. This was her first shock.

Yet what answer does she receive? The Messenger Angels tells

her something she could never have imagined—that he is from her Lord to give her a pure boy. We can imagine the panic and shock that must have overwhelmed Mary when that Messenger Angel, whom she did not yet know to be an emissary from her Lord, spoke to her.

*He said: Thus, it will be. Your Lord said: It is for Me insignificant. And: We will assign him as a sign for humanity and as a mercy from Us. And it had been that which is a decreed command.*

This miraculous event that Mary cannot even begin to imagine is easy for God to accomplish. His is the power that says to anything, 'Be,' and it immediately exists. Hence, everything is easy for Him, whether it is accomplished according to natural laws that are familiar to humanity or in some other fashion.

The angel, who is referred to in this instance as 'the Spirit' tells her that it is God who says that it is easy for Him, and that He wants this unique and remarkable event to be a sign for all humanity, making clear to them His power and free, unshackled will. He also wants this child to be a mercy and a blessing to the Children of Jacob in the first place and to all humanity thereafter. It is by showing them this miraculous event that they know Him, believe in Him and worship Him, seeking to earn His pleasure.

Thus ends the dialogue between the trusted angel and the Virgi Mary. The signs do not mention what happened after that exchang leaving a gap in the story, which frequently happens in the Quran. Bu it does mention that what the angel said to Mary about the birth of her son is a matter that has been settled and finalized. "*that which is a decreed command.* But how? Nothing is mentioned here by way of explanation.

However, we can refer here to the use of the phrase, Our Spirit, which is mentioned in this instance and in another sign. In the other context, the phrase occurs as follows: *And Mary, the daughter of Imran, who guarded her private parts, so We breathed into it of Our Spirit and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been among the ones who are morally obligated.* (66:12)

The story then continues, and we are shown the outcome of all this. We see this baffled virgin going through something much harder for her: *So she conceived him and she went apart with him to a farther place. And the birth pangs surprised her at the trunk of a date palm tree. She said: O would that I had died before this and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing!* (66:22-66:23) This was the third great shock Mary received.

She is all alone ... suffering the pains of childbirth, not knowing about how to cope with the situation and having none to give her even moral support. In her anguish she cries: *She said: O would that I had died before this and I had been one who is forgotten, a forgotten thing!*

We almost see her face, feel her confusion, and sense her agony as she wishes herself into oblivion.

In the midst of all this anguish, she is confronted with the greatest surprise: *So he cried out to her from beneath her: Feel not remorse! Surely, your Lord made under you (f) a brook. And shake towards you (f) the trunk of the date palm tree. It will cause ripe, fresh dates to fall on you. So eat and drink and your eyes be refreshed. If you have seen any mortal, say: I vowed formal fasting to The Merciful so I will never speak to any human being this day.* (19:24-19:26)

O God! What is happening here! A child born this very moment crying out to her, comforting her and reaffirming her bond with her Lord, directing her as to how to obtain food and drink, and providing her with the argument and evidence to use when she sees people.The first thing the voice says to her is that she must not grieve. God has not forsaken you. Indeed, He has made this brook run at your feet, which most probably started its course at that very moment, either from a spring or from a high point nearby. Besides, the palm tree against which she leant provided food. She only need to shake it and it will drop you fresh ripe dates. Thus she has essential food and water.

Then we glimpse a highly dramatic scene when she goes to her people carrying the child. We can easily imagine the great surprise on their faces. Most probably, these were her immediate family. They had known their daughter, Mary, to be exemplary in her purity. She was indeed a virgin dedicated to worship in the temple; but there she was with a baby in her arms. Hence their exclamation. They start by reproaching her: *Sire;u you have drawn near a monstrous thing!* (19:27) But then their reproach takes a different tone, adding sarcasm and ridicule. They call her: *O sister of Aaron*! (19:28) Aaron was a prophet who was in charge of the Temple, passing this duty to his offspring. Mary was often associated with Aaron because of her exemplary devotion in the service of the Temple. How ironic that the girl associated with Aaron's perfect devotion should perpetrate such an enormity: *Your father had not been a morally evil man nor had your mother been an unchaste woman.* (19:28)

In her own defense, Mary says nothing other than carrying out what her amazing child has instructed her to say. But she pointed to the child. Again we are left to imagine their amazement, anger and fury at this young woman ... , carrying her child openly in her arms, and then refusing to answer their questions, only pointing to the child and indicating that they should ask him. But then a supernatural event occurs again and the baby speaks out.

*The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger.*
*Surely, Messengers passed away before him.*

*And his mother was a just person (f).*
*They both had been eating food.*
*Look on how We make manifest the signs to them.*
*Again, look on how they are misled! And she was obedient*
*to He Who is far transcendent and majestic'.* (5:75)

## COMMENTARY°

[This sign] then puts the people face to face with this clear fact in the hope that they will reason properly and bring themselves to understand things as they are. This is coupled with amazement that even after this exposition, they continue to reject the facts: The sign describes both mother and son as people who ate ordinary food. This was a simple fact in the lives of Jesus Christ and his saintly mother. Eating food is a characteristic of living creatures that proves the humanity of Christ and his mother. Food is normally eaten to satisfy an undeniable physical need. Whoever needs to eat food in order to live cannot be a deity. God's life needs no food to support it because He lives and remains alive by Himself. He does not need to have any created thing like food to enter or leave his body. Limitless is He in His glory.

## THE MOTHERS OF THE BELIEVERS

*The Prophet is closer to the ones who believe than their own souls.*
*And his spouses are their mothers*
*and those imbued through the wombs, blood relations,*
*some of them are closer to some other*
*in what is prescribed by God than the other ones who believe*
*and ones who emigrate,*
*but accomplish what you may for your protectors*
*as ones who are honorable—*
*that which had been inscribed in the Book.* (33:6)

## COMMENTARY°

This sign makes the wives of the Prophet the mothers of the believers and, therefore, unable to marry anyone after the Prophet dies. The Prophet only had children from his first wife, Khadija, and his temporary wife, Mariya, the Christian Copt.

This sign (33:6) is an example of comparing analogous situations and reframing them. As we have seen, in pre-Quran Arabia, the most important social connection was one's connection to a tribe. Here, the sign reinforces that as human beings we need social relationships, but instead of it being based on the tribe, it is based on belief in the Oneness of God. They are now related to the wives of the Prophet as their mothers. This is yet another example of how the Quran reframed the common practices of the people.

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## THE WIFE OF ADAM

*Then, We said: O Adam!*
*Truly, this is an enemy to you and to your spouse,*
*so let him not drive you both out from the Garden*
*so that you would be in despair.* (20:117)

### COMMENTARY°

It is clear from these Quranic signs (20:117; 20:121; 20:123; 7:19) and the use of the dual pronoun in Arabic that both Adam and Eve forgot God's command. Even though God forgave them, they were expelled from the Garden because of it.

We know from the Quran and the use of the dual pronoun that both Eve and Adam acted on the temptation of Satan. This is very different from the Biblical interpretation that places the blame solely on Eve.

*Then, they both ate from that*
*so the intimate parts of both showed to both themselves.*
*Both of them took to doing stitching together over both*
*from the leaves of the Garden.*
*And Adam rebelled against his Lord and he erred.* (20:121)

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*He said: Get you both down from here altogether,*
*some of you an enemy to some others.*
*Then, if guidance approaches you from Me,*
*then, whoever followed My Guidance,*
*neither will he go astray, nor will he be in despair.* (20:123)

*And: O Adam! Inhabit you and your spouse the Garden*
*and both eat from where you both willed,*
*but neither of you come near this tree*
*or you both will be of the ones who are unjust.* (7:19)

### COMMENTARY°

The signs remain silent about what kind of tree it was, because providing any specific information on this point does not add any particular information about the purpose of its prohibition. Withholding such information lends weight to the view that the prohibition itself was the objective. God has permitted Adam and his wife the enjoyment of what He has made lawful, and commanded them to steer away from

what has been forbidden. It was necessary to identify something as forbidden so that the human race could learn that people must not exceed their limits. Thus the human will is restrained such that he or she controls desires and caprices. [We] are thus able to elevate [ourselves] above the level of animals who respond involuntarily to their desires and cannot control them. This is indeed the quality that distinguishes humans from animals.

Now Satan begins to play the role for which he dedicated himself. This against a unique creation whose birth God so graciously announced Himself before the society in grand celebration. Furthermore, He ordered the angels to prostrate themselves to him, and expelled Satan from heaven on his account. We are told how God created humans with a dual nature, capable of following both the right and wrong paths. He has inherent weaknesses and desires that can lead astray, unless God's commandments are observed.

*O humanity! Be Godfearing of your Lord*
*Who created you from a single soul and, from it,*
*created its spouse and from them both*
*disseminated many men and women.*
*And be Godfearing of God*
*through Whom you demand rights of one another*
*and the wombs, the rights of blood relations.*
*Truly, God had been watching over you.* (4:1)

## COMMENTARY°

This sign states that the human being was created from a singl soul and from it, God created its mate. Had humanity appreciated this fact, they would have spared themselves all those grievous mistakes under which they have long suffered. They would not have coined such absurdities about women, branding them as the source of impurity and the origin of evil. The truth is that in her nature and temperament, the woman is created from the first human soul in order to be its mate and, thereafter, for numerous men and women to issue forth from them both. There is no difference between man and woman, then, in their nature or origin.... Humanity has groped blindly in this maze of absurd beliefs for a very long time. Women were deprived of their human status, all human characteristics together with all the rights to which their humanity entitles them for no other reason than an absurd, groundless belief that temporarily took hold of man's mind. When humanity recognized its gross mistake and set about correcting it, we find that the other extreme was adopted, one whereby women were left without any check or control. They had forgotten that man and woman are two mu-

tually complementary human beings. They are not identical individuals, but a pair, each part of which complements the other. The divine constitution brings humanity back to this elementary fact after it has strayed far from it.

This opening sign also suggests that the family is the cornerstone of human life. God's will has determined that this new creation on earth begins with one family. He created first a single soul, before creating from it its mate. Together, they formed a family and a married couple. Had He so wished, God could from the very outset have created many men and women, and paired them in couples to form different families. This could have been accomplished without any relationship between them except that they all derive their existence from the will of God, the single deity in the universe. He—limitless is He in His glory—has willed, for a definite purpose of His own, to complement one's tie with his Lord, which is the one from which all ties and relationships are derived, with the tie of kinship. He, therefore, formed the first family from a male and female who came from one soul and shared a single nature. From this first family He spread a multitude of men and women who all share in their tie with their Lord and in their family tie upon which human life is built. It is for this reason that the Islamic system takes so much care of the family and tries to strengthen its ties. It protects the family structure against all influences that may weaken it. Most prominent of these is deviation from human nature that leads to neglecting the abilities and potentials of both man and woman and the essential harmony that makes of these abilities and potentials a complete and coherent whole.

Emphasis is laid in this and other verses on the numerous aspects of the care the Islamic system takes of the family. Indeed, the family cannot establish its solid foundation when women are treated with the cruelty and degradation they receive in every ignorant society. For this reason, Islam tries hard to remove that cruelty and elevate women to a position of dignity.

Finally, we are called upon to look at that great variety in people's characteristics and abilities, after they have all spread out of a single soul and a single family. No two individuals are exactly the same although as many generations as we can imagine have come and gone and despite the creation of a great many individuals in every generation. There is a great variety in shapes and features; in habits, temperaments, manners and feelings; as well as in abilities, concerns and functions. A glance at this great variety exhibited by humanity demonstrates God's creative ability which is without parallel and which designs its creation on the basis of its knowledge and wisdom. It is enough to cast our minds and eyes around that remarkable living pa-

rade of humanity, looking at that ever-renewing multitude of forms that could not have been made except by God. Indeed, no one has dared to attribute his or her creation to anyone other than God. It is only an absolute, limitless will that can achieve such an endless variety from a single source and origin.

To reflect on the creation of people in this way is enough to give a pleasant feeling to our hearts. It strengthens our faith and enhances our sense of fearing God. This is no trifling gain.

At the end of this opening verse, which stimulates all these thoughts, human beings are given a reminder to fear God in whose name people appeal to one another, and to be mindful of their ties of kinship which makes of them all a single entity. It is in the name of God that we make pledges and covenants with one another, and in His name we ask one another to fulfill our duties and obligations, and with His name we swear to one another in order to confirm what we are saying. Hence, we must fear Him in your approach to whatever exists between us of relationships, contacts and transactions.

When we speak of fearing God and of being mindful of our duties towards Him, we speak of something we know well because it is frequently mentioned in the signs. This sign uses the same verb in reference to ties of kinship, as if it says that we must "fear" our ties of kinship. This is a remarkable expression which imparts certain connotations that one can hardly find words to explain. "Fear" your ties of kinship. Enhance your feelings so that you may appreciate the relationships they create and the obligations they constitute. You can then take care never to do any injustice to your kinsfolk and never to treat them badly. Be mindful lest you cause harm to your kinsfolk or offend them. Value your ties of kinship as we value our treasures.

## THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM: HAGAR

We have already looked at the lives of the two mothers of Ishmael and Isaac and now we look at mention of them as mothers as well as wives of Abraham.

> *And when Abraham said: My Lord! Make this land that which is safe and cause me and my children to turn away from worshipping idols. My Lord! Truly, they caused to go astray many among humanity; so whoever heeded me, truly, he is of me. And whoever rebelled against me, then You are truly, Forgiving, Compassionate.* (14:35-14:36)

## THE WIFE OF ABRAHAM: SARAH

*Abraham's woman* (Sarah), *one who is standing up, laughed*
*when We gave her good tidings of Isaac*
*and besides Isaac, Jacob.* (11:71)
*Then, his woman came forward with a loud cry.*
*She slapped her face and said:*
*I am an old barren woman!* (51:29)

## THE WIFE OF NOAH

*God propounded an example for those,*
*ones who are ungrateful*
*like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.*
*They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,*
*ones who are in accord with morality.*
*But they both (f) betrayed them*
*so they avail them not against God at all.*
*And it was said:*
*Enter the fire along with ones who enter.* (66:10)

## THE WIFE OF LOT

*God propounded an example for those,*
*ones who are ungrateful*
*like the woman of Noah and the woman of Lot.*
*They both had been beneath two servants of Our servants,*
*ones who are in accord with morality.*
*But they both (f) betrayed them*
*so they avail them not against God at all.*
*And it was said:*
*Enter the fire along with ones who enter.* (66:10)

## COMMENTARY°

Reports speaking of the betrayal of Noah and Lot by their wives (whereas Pharaoh had betrayed his wife to such an extent that she prayed to be released from him) suggest that it was a betrayal of their messages, rather than their being unfaithful to their marriage bonds. Noah's wife used to join the unbelievers in his community in making fun of him, while Lot's wife used to inform his people when he received guests, knowing what they tried to do with such visitors.

Having made an order to believers to protect themselves and their families from incurring punishment in hell, the chapter now highlights

the principle of individual responsibility. The Prophet's wives, and indeed wives of all believers, are told here that ultimately they are personally accountable for what they do and the decisions they make. Their individual responsibility cannot be waived merely because they are married to a prophet or to a devout believer.

## The Wife of Moses

When Moses went to Midian, he met Shuayb (Jethro) and his daughters. After Moses' encounter with Shuayb's daughters at the well where the daughters were trying to draw water for their herds, when one of the daughters returned to their father, she suggested that Shuayb ask the man to stay and marry one of his daughters.

*When of his own accord he turned his face*
*toward Midian he said:*
*Perhaps my Lord guides me to the right way.*
*And when he went down to the well of Midian,*
*he found a community there of personages drawing water*
*and he found other than them two women who keep away.*
*He said: What is your business?*
*They both said: We draw not water*
*until the ones who are shepherds move on.*
*And our father is an aged, old man*
*So he drew water for them*
*Again, he turned away to the shade and said.*
*My Lord! Truly, I am, certainly, of*
*whatever **You** caused to descend of good to me, in need.*
*Then, drew near him one of the two women, walking bashfully.*
*She said: Truly, my father calls to **you***
*that he may give **you** recompense of compensation*
*because **you** had drawn water for us.*
*So when he drew near him and related to him the narrative,*
*he said: Fear not.*
***You** were delivered from the folk, ones who are unjust.*
*One of the two women said: O my father!*
*Employ him. Truly, best is that **you** would employ*
*the strong, the trustworthy.* (28:22-28:26)

*He said: Truly, I want to wed **you** to one of my two daughters*
*if that **you** will hire **yourself** to me for eight years.*
*But if **you** were to fulfill ten years, then, it will be from **you**,*
*for I want not to press thee hard.*
***You** will find me, if God willed,*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (28:27)

## COMMENTARY°

The old man acted on his daughter's advice. He probably sensed a mutual liking between his daughter and Moses, one that could be the basis for a happy family. It is only natural that a young woman with a healthy, uncorrupted nature be inclined towards a man in whom she discerns strength and honesty. Hence, the old man combined the two purposes, suggesting to Moses that he marries one of his daughters in return for eight years work. Should Moses increase the period to ten years, this would be an added favor, not a commitment to which he would be held: Frankly and simply the old man offered one of his daughters, without naming her, as a wife for Moses, but he might have felt that the intended girl was known to him as they seemed inclined towards each other. He stated this without any embarrassment, for the offer was one of marriage. There is after all nothing to be embarrassed about when the aim is to build a home and establish a family. It is only when people move away from sound, natural values, to observe unhealthy traditions, that they are unnecessarily restricted.

## THE WIFE OF PHARAOH

*And God propounded an example for those who believed:*
*Behold the woman of Pharaoh;*
*she said: My Lord, build for me near Thee a house in the Garden*
*and deliver You me from Pharaoh*
*and his actions and deliver me from the folk,*
*the ones who are unjust.* (66:11)

## COMMENTARY°

Similarly, reports concerning Pharaoh's wife make it clear that she lived in his palace as a believer in God Almighty, and suggest that she was of Asian origin following a divine religion that was revealed before Moses' time. Historical reports mention that the mother of Eminhuteb IV, the Pharaoh who advocated belief in one god, making the sun a symbol of the divine being, calling himself Ekhnaton, was Asian and believed in a religion other than that known in Egypt. God only knows if she is the one referred to in this chapter, or whether the reference is made to the Pharaoh challenged by Moses and his wife. Moses' Pharaoh is definitely different from Eminhuteb IV. We need not, however, be particularly concerned about the exact identity of Pharaoh's wife. What is important is that the Quranic statement confirms a permanent fact in which individual people are only examples.

She was living in the midst of sweeping unbelief, but that did not deter her from seeking her own personal safety. She disowned all con-

nection with Pharaoh's palace, praying to God to grant her a home in heaven. She disavowed any relation with Pharaoh, praying that God grant her safety from him. Realizing that as Pharaoh's wife she was the closest person to him and his actions, she feared that some blame might attach to her. She, therefore, made it clear that she had nothing to do with all this, further praying to God that He keep her away from it: *And God propounded an example for those who believed: Behold the woman of Pharaoh. She said: My Lord, build for me near **You** a house in the Garden and deliver **You** me from Pharaoh and his actions* ... (66:11)

Pharaoh's wife's prayer and her overall position is a shining example of rejecting all temptation that the life of this world can offer, even at its most splendid. Pharaoh was the most powerful king on earth, and his palace offered the best that a woman could desire. Yet his wife chose faith in preference to all this. She did not merely treat it with contempt; she considered it evil and sought refuge with God from yielding to it, praying to be saved from it and its consequences. Yet Pharaoh's wife was a woman standing on her own in the midst of a great kingdom, which makes her all the more admirable and gives her an even greater position. This woman, on her own, resisted the pressures exerted by society, the palace, the throne, the courtiers and her own royal position, lifting her head to heaven seeking its light. She certainly provides a great example of submission to God, resisting all temptations and overcoming all impediments. Hence she deserved he special mention in God's book, the words of which are echoed throughout the universe as they are revealed from on high.

## THE WIFE OF SOLOMON

*She said: My Lord! Truly, I did wrong to myself*
*and I submitted with Solomon to God,*
*the Lord of the worlds.* (27:44)

### COMMENTARY°

She was told to enter the court. When she saw it, she thought it was a lake of water, and she bared her legs. Said he: It is but a court smoothly paved with glass! (27:44)

## THE WIFE OF JOB

*And take in **your** hand a bundle of rushes*
*and strike with it and fail not **your** oath.*
*Truly, We found him one who remains steadfast.*
*How excellent a servant. Truly, he was penitent.* (38:44)

## COMMENTARY°

We are then given more of the story of tests, patience in adversity, followed by favors bestowed from on high. This time, the prophet who is tested is Job:

This sign (38:44) is most often translated as "*And take in your hand a bundle of rushes and strike with it and fail not your oath.*" It is clearly unspecific as to what aspect of Job's life this sign refers to. According to the Old Testament, Job's faithful and long-suffering wife, Rahmah, at some point in Job's patiently bearing his afflictions, tells him to end his suffering by means of suicide.

This Biblical story behind this sign is used in the interpretation of 4:34. As a result of this, translators and interpreters of 4:34 add in parenthesis the word (lightly) after: "beat them" while this is an addition to the sign, as if to say that "beat them" (*nushuz* wives) is sanctioned because it is to be done (lightly).

Quranic commentators pictured her differently saying that at some point out of desperation for money, she sold her hair in order to buy bread for Job. Satan hurried to Job and to increase his grief and anguish, saying that his wife had committed adultery and as a punishment, her hair was cut off. Once Rahmah returned to Job, Job saw her hair was cut. He became angry and swore an oath to beat her with 100 strokes. His wife was in despair because Job, whom she dearly loved and whom she vowed she would leave, has falsely accused her. Once God healed Job and returned his fortune to him, Job became reluctant to carry out his oath. Muslim commentators then say that the angel Gabriel then told Job of her innocence and that Job should honor his oath by striking his wife lightly with a bundle of 100 rushes.

It does not take much for one to see how outside the pale of the Quran this story from commentators and interpreters is that Gabriel would tell Job that it was more important to carry out his oath than to beat an innocent person, even lightly. Rahmah had been the most exemplary wife. Once Job lost all of his material wealth, she did not leave him as his other two wives did, but instead began earning money as a cleaning woman in order to be able to provide food for her husband. When others in the village found Job's state so disgusting, they were not even prepared to help Rahmah carry him to a garbage heap. Yet she remained faithful throughout his long ordeal and then to be punished by a bundle of 100 rushes for whatever someone may have said that she had said or done goes against so many Quranic verses that listing them would only be tiresome to the reader!

To apply any aspect of this story as rationalization for *darab* in 4:34 being interpreted as "beat" (lightly) goes against the rest of the verse for another reason as well. The first statement in 4:34 is that husbands are supporters of their wives because God has given some of them an advantage over others and because they shared their wealth.

In the case of Job, his wife Rahmah was the support of the family so the rest does not apply to their situation.

That is a strong enough in argument to be the basis for some commentators to suggest that Job was supposedly told to strike his wife lightly in order not to fail his oath whereas 5:89 says that God "*will not take you to task for what is unintentional in your oaths*" or Job could have chosen the more humane way and paid an expiation for an oath that he could not fulfill. In addition, the root letters in the first form mean not only "fail not in your oath," but also according to *Taj al-Arus*, "to retract or revoke one's oath." As we have seen the root letters *daraba* also mean to cast, throw or fling to the ground, the verse can be translated as: "*And take in thy hand a bundle of rushes and cast them upon the ground and retract thy oath.*"

Therefore it is a misinterpretation for commentators to use the story of Job and his faithful wife in any sort of justification for a husband to beat his wife even lightly. In *The Old Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, Jay R. Crook (Muhammad Nur) adds in conclusion to this story: "Nevertheless there will always remain a suspicion that the original oral tradition of the story of Rahmah and Job was lost or distorted and the later Muslim commentators, unable to retrieve it, adopted the story of Job's wife from the later Jewish Job cycle to meet their exegetic needs."[14]

## THE WIFE OF ZECHARIAH

*So We responded to him and We bestowed Yahya (John) on him.*
*And We made things right for his spouse and for him.*
*Truly, they had been competing with one another in good deeds*
*and they would call to Us with yearning and reverence.*
*And they had been ones who are humbled before Us.* (21:90)

### COMMENTARY°

So We responded to him, in his call, and gave him John, as a son, and We restored fertility to his wife for him, and so she bore a child, having been barren. Truly they, those Prophets that have been mentioned, would hasten to, they would hurry to perform, good works, namely acts of obedience, and supplicate Us out of desire, for Our mercy, and in awe, of Our chastisement, and they were submissive before Us, humble in their worship.

*He said: My Lord! How will I have a boy*
*while my woman had been a barren woman*
*and, surely, I reached an advanced old age?* (19:8)

COMMENTARY°

In other words, he had reached extreme old age, 120 years; and his wife had reached the age of 98.

## THE WIVES OF MUHAMMAD

*O wives of the Prophet!*
*Whoever of you (f) approaches a manifest indecency*
*her punishment will be multiplied for her twofold.*
*And that would have been easy for God.*
*And whoever of you (f) is morally obligated*
*to God and His Messenger*
*and do as ones (f) in accord with morality,*
*We will give her her compensation two times over.*
*We made ready a generous provision for her.*
*O wives of the Prophet!*
*There is not among the wives any like you.*
*If you (f) were Godfearing, then, be not soft in your saying*
*so that he become desirous he in whose heart is a sickness,*
*but say (f) a saying of one who is honorable.*
*And settle down (f) in your (f) houses*
*and flaunt (f) not your (f) finery as those who flaunted their finery*
*in the previous Age of Ignorance.*
*And perform (f) the formal prayer and*
*give (f) the purifying alms and obey (f) God and His Messenger.*
*God only wants to cause disgrace to be put away from you—*
*People of the House—and purify you*
*with a purification.* (33:30-33:33)

COMMENTARY°

God Almighty then instructs His Messenger to issue an order to his wives ... generally requiring them, when they leave their homes, to cover their bodies and heads with an outer garment. In this way, they would be recognized and he protected from the machinations of transgressors. Their modest appearance would distinguish them as chaste women, which embarrasses those who might follow his wives to tease and malign them.

*O Prophet! Say to your spouses (f) and your daughters*
*and the females, ones who believe, to draw closer their (f) outer gar-*
*ments over themselves (f). That is more fitting*
*so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:59)

## COMMENTARY°

God Almighty then instructs His Messenger to issue an order to his wives, daughters and female believers requiring them, when they leave their homes, to cover their bodies and heads with an outer garment. In this way, they would be recognized and he protected from the machinations of transgressors. Their modest appearance would distinguish them as chaste women, which embarrasses those who follow women to tease and malign them.

Commenting on this verse, al-Suddi says: "Some wicked people in Madinah used to go out at nightfall to make indecent remarks to women. Houses in Madinah were small. Therefore, women went out at night to relieve themselves. However, they were maligned by such wicked remarks. When such people saw a woman wrapped in her outer cover, they refrained from maligning her as they recognized her as free and chaste. A woman who did not have such a cover was subjected to their affronts as they thought her to be a slave."

Based on this sign (33:59), the question of covering or not covering is clearly up to the females, ones who believe as the Prophet's wives and daughters were told to cover themselves, as they did.

The question for the females, ones who believe, becomes one of choice depending upon where they are living. It is a decision they have to make based on the constant human battle between following one's instinct or reinforcing one's free will.

Whether or not one believes in God and follows God's laws, one is obliged to follow the laws of nature, laws that are both voluntary and involuntary. This is to follow one's instincts based on one's pursui of one's whims and desires.

When one chooses to follow God's suggestions one is exercising one's free will by acting against one's instinct. This is the constant battle that one faces in one's lifetime.

A commentator describes the battle in the following way: Achieving a proper balance between the clay (instinct) and the sublime elements (free will) is the highest level human beings are called on to achieve. That is the stage of human perfection. They are not required to shed either element of their constitution so as to become either angel or animal. To attempt a rise that disturbs the balance is a shortcoming that does not suit their essential characteristics, or the purpose of their creation in this unique fashion. People who try to suppress their basic physical instincts are the same as ones who try to suppress their free spiritual powers. Both go beyond straight human nature, imposing on themselves something that God does not sanction....

Quranic critical thinking has formulated its own laws for human life taking into account the constitution of human beings. It established a human system that does not suppress a single aspect of human po-

tential. The whole purpose of this system is to establish a perfect balance between these powers, so that they all work in concert, without allowing anyone of them to encroach on another. Any such encroachment leads to the negation of the other, and every dominance leads to destruction. Human beings are responsible for the maintenance of the essential characteristics of their nature and their accountability to God. The system submission to God (*islam*) establishes for human life is geared to promote these characteristics which God has given to humanity for a clear purpose.

Probing deeply into the issue, it would appear that females, ones who believe, need to be able to freely choose to engage themselves in this battle of consciousness in making decisions to control both aspects of their human self instead of being compelled by others to do so.

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## THE DAUGHTERS OF LOT

*Lot said: These are my daughters*
*if you had been ones who do something.* (15:71)

*They said: Certainly you knew we have no right*
*to your daughters and, truly,*
*you know well what we want.* (11:79)

### COMMENTARY°

Lot was aware of the perversity of the men in his community, who preferred to satisfy their sexual desires with men instead of women. In so doing they rebelled against nature, which avails itself of God's wisdom in creating all species in pairs so that procreation and regeneration can take place. Undistorted nature finds true pleasure in conforming to this wisdom, naturally and instinctively.

## THE DAUGHTERS OF MUHAMMAD

*O Prophet! Say to your spouses (f) and your daughters*
*and the females, ones who believe,*
*to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f).*
*That is more fitting*
*so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:59)

## THE OTHER FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS
### THE SISTER OF MOSES

*Mention when **your** sister walks saying:*
*Shall I point you to one who will take control of him?*
*So We returned **you** to **your** mother that her eyes*
*settle down and she not feel remorse....* (20:40)

*And she said to his sister: Track him.*
*So she kept watching him from afar*
*while they are not aware.*
*And We had forbidden any breast feeding female for him before.*
*Then she* (the sister of Moses) *said:*
*Shall I point you to the people of the house*
*who will take control of him for you*
*and they will be ones who will look after him?* (28:11-28:12)

### COMMENTARY°

The mother of Moses nevertheless exerted her own efforts so as to know what had happened to the child: She said to his sister: Track him. (28:11) She asked her daughter to follow the child in his bo floating along the river, so as to know whether he survived or not. Th girl did as instructed, seeking to establish what happened to her bab brother. She went into different quarters and markets, and she soon saw him from a distance, carried by some of Pharaoh's servants who were looking for someone to suckle him. At this point things regain an air of calm. So she watched him right from the very beginning from a distance, while they were unaware until the time was right to suggest that they give the baby Moses to his own mother, unbeknownst to them, to nurse him. (28:11-28:12)

### MARY, THE DAUGHTER

*And mention when the angels said: O Mary!*
*Truly, God favored **you** (f), and purified **you** (f),*
*and favored **you** (f) above women of the world.*
*O Mary! Be **you** morally obligated to **your** Lord*
*and prostrate yourself (f) and bow down (f)*
*with the ones who bow down.* (3:43)

### COMMENTARY°

"Islamic tradition does not specify much of what occupied Mary in these child- hood days except to say that she was generally busy with the kinds of service possible for a pious young woman. It is clear

from 3:43 that God instructed Mary to pray with others in a group ("prostrate yourself and bow down with those who bow down ..."). A question has been raised about the nature of that common prayer experience and whether it could have taken place within the confines of the temple. Some have asked whether it would have been legitimate for her to pray in the place where congregations of men were gathered praying, others believe that the prescriptions of Jewish law at the time were not exactly the same as those of the Islamic community and thus that she probably would have been able to pray in the temple." In any case it is clear that Mary was considered to have been free from the taint of worldly associations."[15]

*And Mary, the daughter of Imran,*
*who guarded her private parts,*
*so We breathed into it of Our Spirit*
*and she established as true the Words of her Lord and His Books and she had been*
*among the ones who are morally obligated.* (66:12)

## COMMENTARY°

And Mary, the daughter of Imran, provides an example of total dedication. Her story is given from its early beginnings elsewhere in the Quran. Her distinctive quality mentioned here is her purity. Thus, her innocence is made absolutely clear, refuting the vile accusations the Jews leveled at her. It was from this breathing of God's Spirit into her that Jesus, her son, was born.

Both Mary and Pharaoh's wife are splendid examples of women who combined firm faith with purity of behavior and total devotion. God sets these two examples for the Prophets own wives in the context of the event reported in the first section of the chapter. They are also examples set before believing women in all generations.

*The Messiah son of Mary was not but a Messenger.*
*Surely, Messengers passed away before him.*
*And his mother was a just person (f).*
*They both had been eating food.*
*Look on how We make manifest the signs to them.*
*Again, look on how they are misled!*
*And she was obedient to He Who*
*is far transcendent and majestic'.* (5:75)

## COMMENTARY°

This verse then puts them face to face with this clear fact in the hope that they will reason properly and bring themselves to understand things as they are.

## MARY, THE FOSTER DAUGHTER OF ZECHARIAH

*So her Lord received her with the very best acceptance.*
*And her bringing forth caused the very best to develop in her.*
*And Zechariah took charge of her.*
*Whenever Zechariah entered upon her in her sanctuary,*
*he found her with provision.*
*He said: O Mary! From where is this for **you** (f)?*
*She said: This is from God.*
*Truly, God provides to whom He wills without reckoning.* (3:37)

***

*That is tidings from the unseen We reveal to **you**.*
*And **you** had not been present with them*
*when they cast their pens*
*as to which of them would take control of Mary,*
*nor had **you** been present with them*
*when they strive against one another.* (3:44)

## MARY, THE FIRST COUSIN OF PROPHET YAHYA (JOHN), THE NIECE OF THE MOTHER OF YAHYA (JOHN)

### COMMENTARY°

In the case of Yahya (John the Baptist), the Messengers announced it to his father, Zechariah. We know little about his mother except that she was the sister of Hanna (Anna), the mother of the virgin Mary. Mary and Yahya were then first cousins. The announcement came to Zechariah after he had seen his foster-daughter, Mary, in her retreat. He found that she had food that he had not brought to her. He asked her where it came from and she replied: *God provides to whom He wills without reckoning*. Zechariah is then encouraged to ask for a defender of his family honor once he was no longer able to defend his family members.

Similar to the story of the mother of Mary, Elizabeth (Hanna's sister) and her husband, Zechariah, are praised for a special quality that they had of good faith and integrity: they competed with one another in good deeds and they called to their Lord with yearning and reverence.

## FEMALES, THE ONES WHO BELIEVE

*O Prophet! Say to **your** spouses (f) and **your** daughters*
*and the females, ones who believe, to draw closer their (f) outer garments over themselves (f). That is more fitting*
*so that they (f) be recognized and not be maligned.*

*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (33:59)

*God was well-pleased with the ones who believe (f) when they take the pledge of allegiance to you beneath the tree for He knew what was in their hearts and He caused the tranquility to descend on them and He repaid them with a victory near at hand.* (48:18)

*O those who believed! When the females, ones who believe,*
*drew near to you, ones who emigrate (f),*
*put them (f) to a test.*
*God is greater in knowledge as to their (f) belief.*
*Then, if you knew them (f) as ones who believe (f),*
*return them (f) not to the ones who are ungrateful.*
*They (f) are not allowed to them (m)*
*nor are they (m) lawful for them (f).*
*And give them (m) what they (m) have spent.*
*There is no blame on you that you (m) marry them (f)*
*when you have given them (f) their compensation.*
*And hold back conjugal ties with the ones who are ungrateful*
*and ask for what you (m) spent*
*and let them ask for what they (m) spent.*
*That is the determination of God.*
*He gives judgment among you.*
*And God is Knowing, Wise.* (60:10)

*Perhaps if he divorced you (f),*
*his Lord will cause in exchange for him spouses better than you (f),*
*ones who submit (f) to One God,*
*ones who believe (f),*
*ones who are morally obligated (f),*
*ones who repent,*
*ones who worship (f),*
*ones who are inclined to fasting (f),*
*women previously married and virgins.* (66:5)

## CRITICAL THINKING•

### INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN QURANIC MORAL TRAITS

The seven moral traits studied in this Quranic Studies course are the following:

1. BELIEF IN ONE GOD (*TAWHID*)
2. GOD-CONSCIOUSNESS (*TAQWA*)
3. INTEGRITY THROUGH MORAL DISCIPLINE (MORALLY OBLIGATED: *QANATA*)

4. EMPOWERING COURAGE (*BATASHA*)
5. PERSEVERING IN GOODNESS (STEADFAST: *SABARA*)
6. EMPATHIC ALTRUISM (LOVE, MERCY, COMPASSION: *IHSAN*)
7. BEING FAIR AND JUST (*ADL*, RIGHT-MINDED: *RASHAD*)

We understand and develop critical thinking when we reflect on Segment 5 that we have just studied:

Moral traits are interdependent affective strategies. They are described as having:

The traits of mind and character necessary for right action and thinking;
The traits of mind and character essential for fair-minded rationality;
The traits that distinguish the narrow-minded, self-serving critical thinker from the open-minded, truth-seeking critical thinker.

Insight refers to the ability to see and clearly and deeply understand the inner nature of things. In the Quranic perspective, this is something that extremists would disagree with whereas instruction for Quranic critical thinking fosters insight rather than mere performance; it cultivates the achievement of deeper knowledge and understanding through insight. Thinking our way into and through a sign (*ayah*) leads to insights as we synthesize what we are learning, relating one sign to other signs and all signs to personal experience.

Only when we gain analyzed experiences of working and reasoning our way out of prejudice can we gain the higher order abilities of a fair-minded Quranic critical thinker. What we gain is somewhat procedural or sequential in that there is a process we must go through; but we also see that the process cannot be followed out based on a formula or an algorithm, it depends on principles. The somewhat abstract articulation of the moral traits will take on concrete meaning in the light of analyzed experiences. Their true meaning to us will be given in and by these experiences. We will often return to them to recapture and rekindle the insights upon which our moral traits depend.

Generally, to develop moral traits, we must create a collection of analyzed experiences that represent to us intuitive models, not only of the pitfalls of our own previous thinking and experiencing but also processes for reasoning our way out of or around them. These model experiences must be charged with meaning for us. We cannot be indifferent to them. We must sustain them in our minds by our sense of their importance as we sustain and guide ourselves in our thinking.

Intuition can be defined as the direct knowing or learning of something without the conscious use of reasoning. We sometimes seem to know or learn things without recognizing how we came to that knowledge. When this occurs, we experience an inner sense that what we believe is true. The problem is that sometimes we are correct (and have genuinely experienced an intuition) and

sometimes we are incorrect (having fallen victim to one of our prejudices or our imagination). A critical thinker does not blindly accept that what one thinks or believes but cannot account for is necessarily true. A critical thinker realizes how easily we confuse intuitions and prejudices. As critical thinkers we may follow our inner sense that something is so, but only with a healthy sense of humility.

Our own minds and experiences must become the subject of our study and learning. Indeed, only to the extent that the content of our own experiences becomes an essential part of study will the usual subject matter truly be learned. By the same token, the experiences of others must become part of what we study. But experiences of any kind should always be critically analyzed, and we must do our own analyses and clearly recognize what we are doing. This entails that we become explicitly aware of the logic of experience. All experiences have three elements, each of which may require some special scrutiny in the analytic process:

1. Something to be experienced (some actual situation or other);
2. An experiencing subject (with a point of view, framework of beliefs, attitudes, desires, and values); and
3. Some interpretation or conceptualization of the situation.

To take any experience apart, then, we must be sensitive to three distinctive sets of questions:

1. What are the raw facts? What is the most neutral description of the situation? If I describes the experience this way, and another disagrees, on what description can we agree?
2. What interests, attitudes, desires, or concerns do I bring to the situation? Am I always aware of them? Why or why not?
3. How am I conceptualizing or interpreting the situation in light of my point of view? How else might it be interpreted?

We must also explore the interrelationships of these parts:

How did my point of view, values, desires, etc., affect what
I noticed about the situation?
How did they prevent me from noticing other things?
How would I have interpreted the situation had I noticed
those other things?
How did my point of view, desires, etc., affect my interpretation?
How should I interpret the situation?

If we are given many assignments that require us to analyze our experiences and the experiences of others along these lines, with ample opportunity to dialogue among ourselves about which interpretations make the most sense and why, then we will begin to amass a catalogue of critically analyzed experiences.

If the experiences illuminate the pitfalls of thought, the analysis and the models of thinking we suggest will be the foundation for our moral traits and character.

We will develop moral traits because we had thought our way to them and internalized them as concrete understandings and insights, not because we took them up as slogans. Our basic moral traits or values and our thinking processes will be in a symbiotic relationship to each other. Our intellectual and affective lives will become more integrated. Our standards for thinking will be implicit in our own thinking, rather than from teachers, or the authority of a peer group.

As critical thinkers know: The more completely, clearly, and accurately an issue or statement is formulated, the easier and more helpful the discussion of its settlement or verification. Given a clear statement of an issue, and prior to evaluating conclusions or solutions, it is important to recognize what is required to settle it. And before we can agree or disagree with a claim, we must understand it clearly. Critical thinkers recognize problematic claims, concepts, and standards of evaluation, making sure that understanding precedes judgment. They routinely distinguish facts from interpretations, opinions, judgments, or theories. They can then raise those questions most appropriate to understanding and evaluating each.•

Critical thinkers question deeply raising and pursuing root or significant questions. When reading a passage, we look for issues and concepts underlying the claims expressed. We come to our own understanding of the details we learn placing them in the larger framework of the subject and their overall perspe tives.•

These qualities indicate that as critical thinkers, we need to be true to ou own thought, to be consistent in the intellectual standards we apply, to hold ourselves to the same rigorous standards of evidence and proof to which we hold others, to practice what we advocate for others, and to honestly admit discrepancies and inconsistencies in our own thought and action. We believe most strongly what has been justified by our own thought and analyzed experience. We have a commitment to bringing the self we are and the self we want to be together.•

# APPENDIX: MADINAH SIGNS PLACED IN EARLIER MAKKAH CHAPTERS

## QURANIC SIGNS 68:17-68:33

*Truly, We tried them as We tried the Companions of the Garden*
*when they swore an oath that they would pluck fruit,*
*in that which is happening in the morning.*
*They make no exception by saying if God wills.*
*Then, a visitation from **your** Lord visited it*
*while they were ones who sleep,*
*in that which is happening in the morning,*
*it was like a plucked garden!*
*And they called to one another in that which is morning:*
*Set forth in the early morning dawn to your cultivation*
*if you had been ones who pluck fruit.*
*So they set out and they whisper, saying:*
*There will, truly, not enter it today on you any needy person.*
*And they set forth in the early morning, designing,*
*assuming they were ones who have the power.*
*But when they saw it, they said: We are, certainly, ones who go astray!*
*Nay! We are ones who are deprived.*
*The most moderate of them said:*
*Say I not to you: Why glorify you not God?*
*They said: Glory be to God, our Lord!*
*Truly, we had been ones who are unjust.*
*Then, they came forward, some with some others blaming one another.*
*They said: O woe be to us! Truly, we had been ones who are defiant.*
*Perhaps our Lord will cause to exchange for us better than it.*
*Truly, we are ones who quest our Lord.*
*Thus, this is the punishment of this present life,*
*but the punishment of the world to come is greater,*
*if they had been knowing!* (68:17-68:33

## QURANIC SIGNS 68:48-68:50

*So be **you** patient until the determination of **your** Lord*
*and be not like the Companion of the Great Fish* (Jonah)
*when he cried out, one who is suppressed by grief.*
*If a divine blessing not followed him one after another,*
*from His Lord he would be cast forth on the naked shore*
*while he was one who is condemned.*
*But his Lord elected him and made him*
*among the ones in accord with morality.* (68:48-68:50)

## QURANIC SIGNS 73:10-73:11

*And have you patience with regard to what they say*
*and abandon them with a graceful abandoning.*
*Forsake to Me the ones who deny, those imbued with prosperity*
*and respite them for a little.* (73:10-73:11)

## QURANIC SIGNS 107:4-107:7

*So woe to ones who formally pray,*
*ones who are inattentive to their formal prayers,*
*those who make display,*
*yet they repulse giving the assistance.* (107:4-107:7)

## QURANIC SIGN 53:32

*Those who avoid the major sins and the indecencies but the lesser offenses, truly, your Lord is One Who is Extensive in forgiveness.*
*He is greater in knowledge of you when He caused you to grow*
*from the earth and when you were an unborn child*
*in the wombs of your mothers.*
*So you make not pure yourselves.*
*He is greater in knowledge of him who was Godfearing.* (53:32)

## QURANIC SIGN 77:48

*When it will be said: Bow down, they bow not down.* (77:48 )

## QURANIC SIGN 50:38

*And, certainly, We created the heavens and the earth*
*and whatever is between in six days,*
*and no exhaustion afflicted Us.* (50:38)

## QURANIC SIGNS 54:44-54:46

*Or say they: We are aided altogether.*
*Their multitude will be put to flight and they will turn their backs.*
*Nay! The Hour is what is promised them and the Hour will be more*
*calamitous and more distasteful.* (54:44-54:46)

## QURANIC SIGNS 7:163-7:170

*And ask them about the town—that which had been bordering the sea—*
*when they disregarded the Sabbath, when their great fish*
*would approach them on the day of the Sabbath,*
*one that was visible on the shore.*
*And the day they keep not the Sabbath,*
*they approach them not.*

*Thus, We try them because they had been disobeying.*
*And mention when a community of them said: Why admonish a folk*
*whom God is One Who Causes them to Perish*
*or One Who Punishes them with a severe punishment.*
*They said: To be free from guilt before your Lord*
*and so that perhaps they will be Godfearing.*
*So when they forgot of what they were reminded,*
*We rescued those who prohibited evil and We took those who did wrong*
*with a terrifying punishment because they had been disobeying.*
*Then, when they defied what they were prohibited We said to them: Be*
*you apes, ones who are driven away.*
*And mention when **your** Lord caused to be proclaimed*
*that He would, surely, raise up against them*
*until the Day of Resurrection who cause an affliction to befall on them of*
*a dire punishment. Truly, **your** Lord is Swift in repayment.*
*And, truly, He is Forgiving, Compassionate.*
*And We sundered them in the region into communities.*
*Some of them were the ones in accord with morality*
*and others were other than that. And We tried them with benevolence and*
*evil deeds so that perhaps they will return to obedience.*
*Then, after that succeeded successors who inherited the Book.*
*They take advantage of this nearer world, and they say:*
*We will be forgiven.*
*And if an advantage approaches them like it, they will take it.*
*Is not a solemn promise taken from them with the Book*
*that they would say about God only The Truth?*
*And studied they not what is in it, and know that the Last Abode*
*is better for those who are Godfearing?*
*Will you not, then, be reasonable?*
*And those who keep fast to the Book and performed the formal prayer,*
*We will not waste the compensation*
*of the ones who make things right.* (7:163-7:170)

## QURANIC SIGN 36:45

*And when it was said to them: Be Godfearing of what is in advance of you*
*and what is behind you, so that perhaps you will find mercy,* (36:45)

## QURANIC SIGNS 25:68-25:70

*Those who call not to another god with God nor kill the soul*
*which God forbade but rightfully, nor commit adultery.*
*And whoever disregards and commits this will meet sinfulness.*
*The punishment will be multiplied for him on the Day of Resurrection.*
*And he will dwell in it forever, as one who is despised.*

*Whoever has repented and believed and whose actions were done*
*as one in accord with morality, for those God will substitute*
*for their evil deeds benevolence.*
*And God had been Forgiving, Compassionate.* (25:68-25:70)

## QURANIC SIGNS 19:58

*Those are those to whom God was gracious from among the Prophets*
*of the offspring of Adam and whomever We carried with Noah*
*and of the offspring of Abraham and Israel, Jacob,*
*from among whomever We guided and elected.*
*When are recounted to them the signs of the Merciful*
*they fell down, crying, ones who prostrate themselves.*

## QURANIC SIGN 19:71

*There is none of you, but ones who go down to it.*
*This had been a thing decreed, that decreed by **your** Lord.* (19:71)

## QURANIC SIGNS 20:130-20:131

*So have **you** patience with what they say*
*and glorify the praises of **your** Lord*
*before the coming up of the sun and before sunset*
*and during the nighttime night watch*
*and glorify at the end of the daytime*
*so that perhaps **you** will be well-pleased*
*And stretch not out **your** eyes*
*for what We gave of enjoyment in this life*
*to spouses among them as the luster of this present life*
*so that We try them by it.*
*And provision of **your** Lord is Best*
*and that which endures.* (20:130-21:131)

## QURANIC SIGNS 56:81-56:82

*Then, is it this discourse that you are ones who scorn?*
*And you make it your provision that you,*
*you deny the Recitation.* (56:81-56:82)

## QURANIC SIGN 26:197

*Would it not be a sign for them that is known to the knowing*
*among the Children of Israel?* (26:197)

## QURANIC SIGNS 26:224-26:227

*As for the poets, the ones who are in error follow them.*

*Have you not considered that they wander in every valley*
*and that they say what they accomplish not?*
*But those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality*
*remembered God frequently and helped themselves*
*after they were wronged.*
*And those who did wrong will know*
*by which overturning they will be turned about!* (26:224-26:227)

## QURANIC SIGNS 28:52-28:55

*Those to whom We gave the Book before it, they believe in it.*
*And when it is recounted to them, they say:*
*We believed in it. Truly, it is The Truth from our Lord.*
*Truly, even before it we had been ones who submit to God.*
*Those will be given their compensation two times*
*because they patiently endured and drive off evil deeds*
*with benevolence and they spend out of what We provided them.*
*And when they heard idle talk, they turned aside from it*
*and said: To us are our actions and to you are your actions.*
*Peace be to you! We are not looking for*
*the ones who are ignorant.* (28:52-28:55)

## QURANIC SIGNS 17:26

*And give to the possessor of kinship his right*
*and to the needy and to the traveler of the way.*
*And spend not extravagantly an extravagant spending.* (17:26)

## QURANIC SIGNS 17:32-17:33

*And come not near committing adultery.*
*Truly, it had been a great indecency! How evil a way!*
*And kill not a soul that God forbade, but rightfully.*
*And whoever was slain as one who is treated unjustly, surely,*
*We assigned for his protector, authority,*
*but he should not exceed all bounds in killing.*
*Truly, he would be one who is helped by the Law.* (17:32-17:33)

## QURANIC SIGN 17:57

*Those are those to whom they call to,*
*they are looking for an approach to their Lord—*
*whoever is nearer—and they hope for His mercy*
*and they fear His punishment.*
*Truly, the punishment of your Lord had been one to beware.* (17:57)

## QURANIC SIGNS 17:73-17:80

*And, truly, they were about to persecute **you***
*for what We revealed to **you***
*so that **you** would devise against Us other than it.*
*And, then, they would take **you** to themselves as a friend.*
*And if We made **you** not firm, certainly,*
***you** were about to incline to them a little.*
*And, then, We would have caused **you** to experience a double of this life*
*and a double after dying.*
*Again, **you** would find for **yourself** no helper against Us.*
*They were about to hound **you** from the region*
*that they drive **you** out of it.*
*Then, they would not linger in expectation behind **you***
*but for a little while.*
*This is, surely, a custom with whomever We sent before **you***
*of Our Messengers.*
*And **you** will not find in Our custom any revision.*
*Perform the formal prayer from the sinking sun until the darkening*
*of the night and the recital at dawn.*
*Truly, the dawn recital had been one that is witnessed.*
*And keep vigil with it in the night as a work of supererogation for **you**.*
*Perhaps **your** Lord will raise **you** up to a station*
*of one who is praised*
*And say: My Lord! Cause me to enter a gate in sincerity*
*And bring me out as one who is brought out in sincerity.*
*And assign me from that which proceeds from **Your** Presence*
*a helping authority.* (17:73-27:80)

## QURANIC SIGNS 10:40

*And of them are some who believe in it*
*and of them are some who believe not in it.*
*And **your** Lord is greater in knowledge*
*of the ones who make corruption.* (10:40)

## QURANIC SIGNS 10:94-10:96

*So if **you** had been in uncertainty about*
*what We caused to descend to **you**,*
*then, ask those who recited the Book before **you**.*
*Certainly, The Truth drew near **you** from **your** Lord*
*so **you** have not been among the ones who contest.*
***You** have not been among those who denied the signs of God,*
*for, then, **you** would be among the ones who are losers.*
*Truly, those against whom the Word of **your** Lord has been realized,*
*will not believe.* (10:94-10:96)

## QURANIC SIGN 11:12

*So would **you** perhaps be one who leaves*
*some of what is revealed to **you**?*
*Or is **your** breast that which is narrowed by it because they say:*
*Why was a treasure not caused to descend to him*
*or an angel drew near him?*
*Truly, **you** are only a warner. And God is a Trustee over everything.*
*Or they say: He devised it.* 11:12*

## QURANIC SIGN 11:17

*Is he, then, who had been on a clear portent from his Lord,*
*and recounts it from Him as one who bears witness—*
*and before it was the Book of Moses, a leader and a mercy—like them?*
*Those believe in it. Whoever is ungrateful for it among the confederates,*
*he is promised the fire! So be **you** not hesitant about it.*
*Truly, it is The Truth from **your** Lord,*
*except most of humanity believes not.* (11:17 )

## QURANIC SIGN 11:114

*And perform the formal prayer at the two ends*
*of the daytime and at nearness of the nighttime.*
*Truly, benevolence causes evil deeds to be put away.*
*That is a reminder for the ones who remember.* (11:114)

## QURANIC SIGNS 12:1-12:3

*Alif Lam Ra. That are the signs of the clear Book.*
*Truly, We caused to descend a Recitation in Arabic*
*so that perhaps you will be reasonable.*
*We relate to **you** the fairer of narratives through what We revealed*
*to **you** of this, the Quran, although **you** had been before this*
*among the ones who are heedless.* (12:1-12:3)

## QURANIC SIGN 12:7

*Certainly, there had been in Joseph*
*and his brothers signs for the ones who ask.* (12:7)

## QURANIC SIGN 15:87

*And, certainly, We gave **you** seven often repeated parts*
*of the sublime Quran.* (15:87)

## QURANIC SIGNS 6:20

*Those to whom We gave the Book recognize it*

*as they recognize their own children.*
*But those, they who lost themselves, they believe not.* (6:20)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:23

*Again, their dissent will not be but that they would say:*
*By God! Our Lord! We had not been ones who are polytheists.* (6:23)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:91

*And they measured not God with His true measure*
*when they said: God caused not to descend anything to a mortal.*
*Say: Who caused the Book to descend that was brought about for Moses*
*as a light and guidance for humanity?*
*You make it into parchments.*
*You show them some of it and conceal much of it.*
*And you were taught what you know not, you nor your fathers.*
*Say: God revealed it. Again, forsake them playing,*
*engaging in their idle talk.* (6:91)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:93

*And who does greater wrong than he who devised lies against God*
*or said: It was revealed to me, when nothing is revealed to him.*
*Or who said: I will cause to descend the like of*
*what God caused to descend.*
*And if **you** would see when the ones who are unjust*
*are in the perplexity of death and the angels—*
*the ones who stretch out their hands will say: Relinquish your souls.*
*Today, you will be given recompense with the humiliating punishment for*
*what you had been saying about God other than The Truth.*
*And you had been growing arrogant to His signs.* (6:93)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:114

*Will I be looking for an arbiter other than God*
*while it is He Who caused to descend to you the Book,*
*one that is distinct?*
*And those to whom We gave the Book,*
*they know that it is one that is sent down by **your** Lord with The Truth. So*
***you** have not been among the ones who contest.* (6:114)

## QURANIC SIGN 6:141

*And it is He Who caused gardens to grow, trellised*
*and without being trellised and the date palm trees*
*and a variety of harvest crops and the olives and the pomegranates*

*resembling and not resembling one another.*
*Eat of its fruit when it bore fruit and give its due*
*on the day of its reaping and exceed not all bounds.*
*Truly, He loves not the ones who are excessive.* (6:141)

## QURANIC SIGNS 6:151-153

*Say: Approach now. I will recount what your Lord forbade you.*
*Ascribe nothing as partners with Him.*
*And show kindness to the ones who are your parents.*
*And kill not your children from want.*
*We will provide for you and for them.*
*And come not near any indecencies*
*whether these were manifest or what was inward.*
*And kill not a soul which God forbade, unless rightfully.*
*He charged you with that so that perhaps you will be reasonable.*
*And come not near the property of the orphan but with what is fairer*
*until one reaches the coming of age.*
*And live up to the full measure and balance with equity.*
*We will not place a burden on any soul, but to its capacity.*
*And when you said something, be just,*
*even if it had been with possessors of kinship*
*and live up to the compact of God.*
*Thus, He charged you with it so that perhaps you will recollect.*
*And that this is My straight path, so follow it.*
*And follow not the ways that will split you up from His way.*
*He charged you this with it,*
*so that perhaps you will be Godfearing.* (6:151-6:153)

## QURANIC SIGNS 31:27-31:29

*And if trees on the earth were only pens*
*and the sea causes to increase after that with seven more seas*
*that were ink, yet the Words of God would not come*
*o an end. Truly, God is Almighty, Wise.*
*Your creation and your Upraising are not but like that of a single soul.*
*Truly, God is Hearing, Seeing.*
*Have you not considered that God causes*
*the nighttime to be interposed into the daytime*
*and causes the daytime to be interposed into the nighttime*
*and caused the sun to become subservient and the moon,*
*each run for a term, that which is determined*
*and that God is Aware of what you do?* (31:27-31:29)

## Quranic Sign 34:6

*And consider those who were given the knowledge*
*that what was caused to descend to **you** from **your** Lord.*
*It is The Truth and it guides to a path of*
*The Almighty, The Worthy of Praise.* (34:6)

## Quranic Signs 39:52-39:54

*Know they not that God extends the provision for whomever He wills and*
*tightens it for whom He wills?*
*Truly, in this are, certainly, signs for a folk who believe.*
*Say: O My servants who exceeded all bounds against themselves,*
*despair not of the mercy of God.*
*Truly, God forgives all impieties.*
*Truly, He is The Forgiving, The Compassionate.*
*Be penitent to your Lord and submit to Him*
*before the punishment approaches you.*
*Again, you will not be helped.* (39:52-39:54)

## Quranic Signs 40:56-40:57

*Truly, those who dispute about the signs of God*
*without any authority having approached them*
*there is nothing but having pride in their breasts*
*They will never be ones who reach its satisfaction.*
*So seek refuge in God. Truly, He, He is The Hearing, The Seeing.*
*Certainly, the creation of the heavens and the earth is greater*
*than the creation of humanity,*
*yet most of humanity knows not.* (40:56-40:57)

## Quranic Signs 42:23-42:25

*That is what God gives as good tidings to His servants*
*who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality.*
*Say: I ask you not for compensation, but for the affection for any kin.*
*And whoever gains benevolence, We will increase for him goodness in it.*
*Truly, God is Forgiving, Most Ready to Appreciate.*
*Or they say: He devised against God a lie.*
*But if God wills He would have sealed over **your** heart.*
*And God blots out falsehood and verifies The Truth by His Words.*
*Truly, He is Knowing of what is in the breasts.*
*And He accepts the remorse of His servants and pardons their evil deeds. And*
*He knows what you accomplish.* (42:23-42:25)

## Quranic Sign 42:27

*And if God extended the provision for His servants,*
*they would be insolent in the earth,*
*but He sends down by measure whatever He wills.*
*Truly, He is The Aware, The Seeing of His servants.* (42:27)

## QURANIC SIGN 45:14

*Say to those who believed: Forgive those who hope not*
*for the Days of God that He give recompense to a folk*
*according to what they had been earning.* (45:14)

## QURANIC SIGN 46:10

*Say: Considered you if this had been from God*
*and you were ungrateful for it and bore witness*
*as one who bears witness from among the Children of Israel*
*to its like and believed in it, yet you grew arrogant,*
*how unjust you are; truly,*
*God guides not the folk, the ones who are unjust.* (46:10)

## QURANIC SIGN 46:15

*And We charged the human being with kindness*
*to ones who are his parents.*
*His mother carried him painfully and she painfully brought him forth.*
*And the bearing of him and the weaning of him are thirty months.*
*When he was fully grown, having come of age and reached forty years he*
*said: My Lord! Arouse me that I may give thanks*
*for **Your** divine blessing, that with which **You** were gracious to me*
*and to ones who are my parents*
*and that I do as one in accord with morality*
*so that **You** be well-pleased and make things right for me*
*and my offspring.*
*Truly, I repented to **You***
*and, truly, I am of the ones who submit to God.* (46:15)

## QURANIC SIGN 46:35

*So have **you** patience as endured patiently those imbued with constancy*
*of the Messengers and let them not seek to hasten the Judgment.*
*As, truly, on a Day they will see what they are promised*
*as if they lingered not in expectation but for an hour of daytime.*
*This is delivering the message!*
*Will any be caused to perish but the folk, the ones who disobey?* (46:35)

## QURANIC SIGN 18:28

*And have **you** patience **yourself** with those who call to their Lord*
*in the morning and the evening, wanting His Countenance.*
*And let not **your** eyes pass over them*
*wanting the adornment of this present life.*
*And obey not him whose heart We made neglectful of Our Remembrance*
*and who followed his own desires and whose affair had been excess.* (18:28)

## Quranic Signs 18:83-18:101

*Say: I will recount to you a remembrance of him.*
*Truly, We established him firmly on the earth*
*and gave him a route to everything.*
*So he pursued a route until when he reached the setting of the sun.*
*He found it beginning to set in a spring of muddy water.*
*And he found near it a folk.*
*We said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn! Either you will punish them*
*or you will take them to yourself with goodness.*
*He said: As for him who did wrong, we will punish him.*
*Again, he will be returned to his Lord*
*Who will punish him with a horrible punishment.*
*But as for him who believed and did as one in accord with morality,*
*he will have the fairer recompense.*
*And we will say to him of our command with ease.*
*Again, he pursued a route until*
*when he reached the rising place of the sun.*
*He found it coming up on a folk*
*for whom We make not any obstruction against it.*
*Thus, We, surely, enclosed whatever was near him*
*through awareness.*
*Again, he pursued a route until when he reached*
*between two embankments.*
*He found behind them a folk*
*who would almost not understand any saying.*
*They said: O Dhu-l Qarnayn! Truly, Gog and Magog are*
*ones who make corruption in and on the earth.*
*Will we assign to you payment if you have made an embankment*
*between us and between them?*
*He said: What my Lord established firmly for me is better,*
*so assist me with strength.*
*I will make a fortification between you and between them.*
*Give me ingots of iron, until when he made level between the two cliffs.*
*He said: Blow, until when he made it a fire.*
*He said: Give me molten brass to pour out over it.*
*So they were not able to scale it*
*nor were they able to dig through it.*
*He said: This is a mercy from my Lord.*
*So when the promise of my Lord drew near, He will made it powder.*
*And the promise of my Lord had been true.*
*And that Day We will leave some of them*
*to surge like waves on some others.*
*And the trumpet will be blown,*
*then, We will gather them altogether.*
*We will present the depths of hell on that Day in plain view*

*to ones who are ungrateful, to those whose eyes had been screened*
*from My Remembrance*
*and who had not been able to hear.* (18:83-18:101)

## QURANIC SIGNS 16:126-16:128

*And if you chastised, then, chastise*
*with the like of that with which you were chastised.*
*But if you endured patiently, certainly,*
*it is better for the ones who remain steadfast.*
*And have **you** patience and **your** patience is only from God.*
*And feel not remorse over them,*
*nor be **you** troubled about what they plan.*
*Truly, God is with those who were Godfearing*
*and those, they are ones who are doers of good.* (16:126-16:128)

## QURANIC SIGNS 14:28-14:29

*Have **you** not considered those who substituted ingratitude*
*for the divine blessing of God*
*and caused their folk to live in abodes of nothingness?*
*They will roast in hell.*
*Miserable will be the stopping place!* (14:28-14:29)

## QURANIC SIGNS 32:16-32:20

[Those] *whose sides deliberately avoided their sleeping places*
*to call to their Lord in fear and hope.*
*And they spend of what We provided them.*
*No soul knows what was concealed for them of comfort for their eyes*
*as a recompense for what they had been doing.*
*Is he who had been one who believes*
*like he who had been one who disobeys?*
*They are not on the same level.*
*As for those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*for them are Gardens as places of shelter,*
*hospitality for them for what they had been doing.*
*And as for those who disobeyed, their place of shelter will be the fire.*
*Every time they would want to go forth from there,*
*they would be caused to return to it.*
*And it will be said to them:*
*Experience the punishment of the fire*
*which you had been denying!* (32:16-32:20)

## QURANIC SIGN 30:17

*So glory be to God at the time of the evening hour*
*and at the time when it comes to be the morning!* (30:17 )

## QURANIC SIGNS 29:1-29:11

*Alif Lam Mim.Assumed humanity that they will be left*
*because they say: We believed and they will not be tried*
*And, certainly, We tried those who were before them.*
*Then, certainly, God knows those who were sincere*
*and knows the ones who lie.*
*Or assumed those who do evil deeds that they will out do Us?*
*How evil is that about which they give judgment!*
*Whoever had been hoping for the meeting with God,*
*then, truly, the term of God is that which arrives.*
*And He is The Hearing, The Knowing.*
*Whoever struggled, he struggles only for himself.*
*Then, truly, God is Sufficient for the worlds.*
*And those who believed and do as ones in accord with morality,*
*certainly, We will absolve them of their evil deeds*
*and We will give recompense for the fairer of what they had been doing.*
*And We charged the human being with goodness*
*to ones who are his parents and if they struggled with **you***
*that **you** ascribe partners with Me,*
*that of which for **you** there is no knowledge, then, obey them not.*
*To Me is your return and I will tell you of what you had been doing.*
*And those who believed and did as the ones in accord with morality,*
*We will, certainly, cause them to enter*
*among the ones in accord with morality.*
*And of humanity is he who says:*
*We believed in God. But, when he was maligned for the sake of God*
*he mistook the persecution by humanity for a punishment by God.*
*And if help drew near from **your** Lord, they would, surely, say:*
*We had been with you. Is not God greater in knowledge*
*of what is in the breasts of beings?*
*And, certainly, God knows those who believed*
*and, certainly, He knows the ones who are hypocrites.* (29:1-29:11)

## ENDNOTES

1 Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-maghazi Waqidi*, 139, 151.

2 Ibid.

3 SUNY Press, pp 163-164 on the authority of Ibn Humayd—Salamah—Muhammad ibn Ishaq—Abd al-Rahman ibn al-Harith ibn Ayyash ibn Abi Rabiah.) (al-Tabari, Volume 9 pp 163 ff.

4 Abd Allah ibn Umar from Ubayd ibn Jubayr, a freedman of al-Hakan ibn Abu al-As, from Abd Allah ibn Amr ibn al-As from Abu Muwayhiba, freedman of the Messenger.

5 Yaqub ibn Utba from Muhammad ibn Muslim al-Zuhri from Ubayd Allah ibn Abd Allah ibn Utba ibn Masud from Ayisha, the prophet's wife.

6 Ahmad ibn Hammad al-Dulabi — Sufyan — Sulayman ibn Abi Muslim—Said ibn Jubayr —that Ibn Abbas states. Something similar is reported by Abu Kurayb—Yahya ibn Adam—Ibn Uyaynah—Sulayman al-Ahwal—Said ibn Jubayr—Ibn Abbas states; Abu Kurayb and Salih ibn Sammal—Waki—Malik ibn Mighwal—Talhah ibn Musarrif—Said ibn Jubayr—Ibn Abbas states.

7 *Kitab Waqidi*, p 150.

8 Muhammad al-Waqidi, *Kitab Maghazi*, p. 149, p. 153.

9 Tabari concerning the Messenger.

10 Farama is in the extreme northwestern Sinai, not far to the east of Port Said. The Greeks called it Pelusium. Today it is called Tell Farama.

11. Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*, p. 4.

12. Mary addresses the Angel in masculine the 2nd person singular and the Quran refers to her in the feminine 2nd person singular.

13 "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," Jane I. Smith and Yvonne Y. Haddad. *The Muslim World*, Vol. LXXIX, July/October 1989, Nos. 3-4.

14 *The Old Testament: An Islamic Perspective*, Jay R. Crook (Muhammad Nur), p 746.

15 "The Virgin Mary in Islamic Tradition and Commentary," pp 165-166.